

**Legislative Assembly.***Tuesday 8th November, 1938.*

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The **SPEAKER** took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

### QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL BANK.

*Case of Charles Denham.*

Miss **HOLMAN** asked the Minister for Forests: Will he lay on the Table all papers dealing with the resumption of part of the property of Charles Denham at Harvey, and with the refusal of the Agricultural Bank to grant Charles Denham a permit to take legal action in the matter?

The **MINISTER FOR FORESTS** replied: No; but the papers may be made available for inspection by the hon. member at the office of the Conservator of Forests, if desired.

### QUESTION—SUSTENANCE WORKERS.

*Deduction for rations supplied while stood down.*

Mr. **DONEY** asked the Minister for Employment: Is the practice of making the cost of rations, supplied during prolonged standing-down periods to sustenance workers, a charge on subsequent wage payments to such workers, in keeping with the policy of his department?

The **MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT** replied: No such practice is followed.

### BILL—AMENDMENTS INCORPORATION.

Introduced by the Minister for Justice and read a first time.

### MOTION—GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [4.37]: I move—

That on Wednesday, the 9th November, and each alternate Wednesday thereafter, Government business shall take precedence of all motions and Orders of the Day on Wednesdays as on all other days.

This is the usual motion which is moved at about this stage of the session. On looking up what was done last session, I find that the motion was submitted on the 2nd November. During the current session there has not been nearly so much private members' business as usual on the notice paper, and the House has largely dealt with what is there. Indeed, on one or two Wednesdays we got through private members' business and were able to deal with Government business. It is hardly necessary for me to give an assurance that private members will have opportunities of bringing any matter before the House. That is the invariable practice, and hon. members can be confident that every subject with which they may desire to deal will be afforded opportunity for full discussion. To-day's notice paper shows only nine items of private members' business, and these could be disposed of at one sitting. The Government's desire is that its business may be got on with, so that it may be considered in another place.

**HON. C. G. LATHAM** (York) [4.39]: It seems to me that the Premier on this occasion is a little earlier than usual. A glance at the notice paper shows that there is no justification for the motion. Very little Government business appears on the paper. True, notice of one Bill has been given for this afternoon.

The Premier: An important Bill.

**HON. C. G. LATHAM**: I do not know whether it is important or not.

The Premier: It deals with wheat prices. That is important.

**HON. C. G. LATHAM**: Yes, it is. However, I wish to avoid what happened last session, at the end of which members were not afforded all the opportunities due to them for discussion of their business. For that I do not blame private members. Probably there is a congestion of Government business. If I were sure the Government would introduce its Bills now I would not raise any objection; but the session is get-

ling on. We are in the second week of November, and the Loan Bill has not even yet been brought down; that Bill is usually brought down before this time of the year. I realise the impossibility of introducing a Loan Bill with any degree of confidence until the Government knows what amount will be allocated to the State by the Loan Council. Members are entitled to as much time as possible for their business, and I am sorry the Premier has thought fit to move this motion, in view of the very small amount of Government business on the notice paper.

The Premier interjected.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I would not have raised any objection to the motion being moved next week.

The Premier: The Government is desirous of proceeding with the Wheat Products (Prices Fixation) Bill.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: If that is so, we will agree to the motion, because we are anxious that that measure should be put before us and discussed thoroughly. Any delay might mean loss to wheat farmers. On that account I shall not call for a division. I point out one other aspect. When I was speaking to a motion the other evening, I said I had been informed that additional Royal Commissions were being appointed. The Premier, however, said that was not so, but that a departmental inquiry was proceeding. From press reports I understand the inquiry is to be converted into a Royal Commission, which proposes to call evidence. We already have one select committee of this House sitting, as well as two Royal Commissions, besides the business of Parliament. I do not know how the "Hansard" staff can cope with the situation. Is the Government aware of the terrific load that is being put on our "Hansard" staff? I sincerely hope the Government is. If this Royal Commission proposes to travel to the South-West to take evidence, I hope it will get a reporter of its own to take shorthand notes.

The Premier: The "Hansard" staff is paid to do the work. If it does not want to do it, we will make other arrangements and probably get it done more economically.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know that the "Hansard" staff has said anything about the matter. I am not voicing "Hansard's" opinion. As I said, the other day the Pre-

mier stated another Royal Commission was not being appointed but a departmental inquiry was proceeding. At present a select committee on education is sitting, and the "Hansard" staff cannot do more than what is possible in reporting these investigations. This is about the only chance I shall have of pointing out the position, and I sincerely hope no additional select committees will be appointed this session. Just about the close of the session we sometimes sit all night: how can the "Hansard" staff and members of this House cope with all the business? Select committees are useless unless they can report to the House. I gather the Premier thinks I am ventilating "Hansard's" troubles. I am not. "Hansard" has an opportunity of ventilating its own troubles. I am ventilating members' grievances. Members cannot possibly get on with their work if the House continues to appoint select committees. The select committee inquiring into the educational facilities of the State has a huge task to perform, and I doubt whether it will be able to report this session. I dare say this session we shall be in a position no different from that in which we found ourselves at the end of other sessions: we shall be overrun with business. I put it to the Premier beforehand that we cannot be expected to agree to all the legislation introduced by the Government. No Opposition could do so; it is not to be expected; but we do desire to give every consideration to legislation proposed, and we cannot do so unless the Government brings down its Bills. The Bill of which we have had notice to-day—I do not know whether it will be introduced this week—is one upon which there is great diversity of opinion on both sides of the House. I do not know what is in the Government's mind, but I doubt whether the measure will have the unanimous support of members. I do plead with the Government to introduce its legislation at the earliest possible moment, and not to adopt the method followed last year of introducing Bills at 3 a.m. and expecting members to grasp them at once. We cannot have sound legislation on such lines. Dissatisfaction is caused by adopting such methods. I presume it will be useless to oppose the motion, but I ask the Government to spread out its legislation for the remainder of the session in such a manner as will enable members to give proper consideration to it. This we are anxious to do.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton—in reply) [4.47]: So far as Government business this session is concerned, the Leader of the Opposition has kept his word. He has given much consideration to Bills brought down by the Government. I venture to say that at this stage of the session we are well ahead with Government business.

Hon. C. G. Latham: But we do not know what legislation you are bringing down.

The **PREMIER**: I do not think very much more legislation will be brought down this session. We are further advanced now than we have been at this stage for many sessions past. Much necessary legislation has already been disposed of.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I think 30 Bills were introduced in a fortnight last year.

The **PREMIER**: Nothing of the kind is likely to happen this session. The House has sat late, and we have disposed of much of the business appearing on the notice paper, so that a last-minute rush is unlikely. We have been trying to do what the Leader of the Opposition has suggested we should do, and we have had the assistance that he promised to give us. No complaints have been made about late sittings, though we are further ahead at this stage than we have been for many years past. The first business on the notice paper to-day is the third reading of two tax Bills. I do not remember the passage of tax Bills at this stage of the session before; and many other Bills of that type have been considered by the House and transmitted to the other Chamber. Not much more Government business of importance remains to be introduced. If we make good progress and the session can terminate early, it will be better for all. However, private members' business cannot now take precedence of such important Government measures as the Wheat Products (Prices Fixation) Bill, which necessarily must occupy some time. It may prove to be contentious. Let us get on with such measures, and then we can deal with private members' business as opportunity offers. I repeat the assurance I have already given, that ample opportunity will be afforded for the discussion of private members' business.

Question put and passed.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, leave of absence for one week granted to Hon. P. Collier (Boulder) on the ground of public business.

## BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1. Financial Emergency Tax.
2. Financial Emergency Tax Assessment Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

## BILL—COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Reports of Committee adopted.

## BILL—WHEAT PRODUCTS (PRICES FIXATION).

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [4.52] in moving the second reading said: I regret the necessity for legislation of this character, but legislative action is imperative owing to the stark reality of the position which faces not only the wheatgrower but also other sections of the community dependent upon the wheatgrowing industry for a livelihood. The fall in wheat prices during the last few months, apart entirely from the effects of an unsatisfactory season, has brought the industry to the brink of ruin, and the farmer and the State are facing a situation very similar to that of 1930-31. It would be correct to say that the principal factor responsible for the 1930-31 depression—if we accept the additional infliction of a serious drought—is operating to-day, namely, the excess world wheat production and the possibilities of a large unsaleable surplus production.

For approximately 10 years prior to 1931, the price of wheat to farmers fluctuated around 4s. 6d. per bushel. Then it collapsed to an average level of about 2s. 3d. per bushel for six years from 1931 to 1936. It rose temporarily again in the year 1936-37 to the vicinity of 4s. 6d. per bushel, and for the last season, 1937-38, it is likely to average about 3s. 8d. per bushel. The outlook for the season now opening is very depressing, as the price of wheat to-day is far below the level at which the average farmer dependent on a wheat crop can make a

living. The collapse in wheat prices in 1930-31, followed by five years of low prices, was due to a succession of very large world harvests commencing in 1928. This, in turn, was followed by a succession of comparatively small harvests in 1934-1935 and 1935-1936, due largely to drought and disease in the United States and Canada. The surplus exportable carry-over decreased from 564,000,000 bushels in 1930-31 to 88,000,000 bushels in 1936-37, with the result that prices immediately reacted, returning to much higher levels. In 1937-38 there was a moderately large world harvest, the surplus carry-over increasing to 220,000,000 bushels; and prospects for 1938-39 indicate a record production.

Present indications are that the world production of wheat in 1938-39 will prove to be very much greater than the world's requirements. One authority estimates that, the surplus in exporting countries, apart from Russia, will be 874,000,000 bushels, exclusive of old season's carry-over. If that be so, this year's harvest will add perhaps 350,000,000 bushels to surplus stocks. As the exportable surplus carried over at the 31st July, 1938, amounted to about 220,000,000 bushels, this indicates a return in 1938-39 to something like the position of 1932-33, when the world's carry-over of wheat was 609,000,000 bushels. The price of wheat has already fallen to the vicinity of the low level of the depression year 1930-31. The immediate factor in this renewed regression is the recovery of production in North America and the aggregate satisfactory harvests in Europe.

The latest estimates of the world's harvest for the forthcoming season indicate that, including Russia—the figures for which are only estimated—there will be 5,576,000,000 bushels, compared with 5,031,000,000 bushels last year, an increase of 545,000,000 bushels. With the exception of Australia and New Zealand, where the estimated crops amount to 167,000,000 bushels, compared with 193,000,000 bushels last year—a decrease of 26,000,000 bushels—the other wheat-producing countries will have increased harvests. For instance, it is estimated that the harvest in Europe will amount to 2,986,000,000 bushels, compared with 2,746,000,000 bushels last year, an increase of 240,000,000 bushels. The estimated crop for America—including the United States, Argentine and Canada—is

1,601,000,000 bushels, compared with 1,305,000,000 bushels last year, an increase of 296,000,000 bushels. Asia estimates a harvest of 691,000,000 bushels compared with 659,000,000 bushels last year, an increase of 32,000,000 bushels; and the figures for Africa are an estimated harvest of 129,776,000 bushels, as against 128,088,000 bushels last year, or an increase of 1,688,000 bushels. The factors governing the present position are—bumper harvests in the exporting countries, and the self-sufficiency programmes of importing countries, which have resulted in a decline in import demand from an average of 800 million bushels in the years 1928 to 1932 to 563 million bushels in the years 1932 to 1937. The result is another temporary glut of wheat, probably greater in quantity and already as severe in its effects on prices as was the glut of 1929 and the following years. The reason for the decline in prices is, therefore, not far to seek. Excluding Russia, the large harvests have increased the surplus carry-over from 88 million bushels in 1936-37 to an estimate of 580 million bushels for 1938-39, whereas the importing countries require 237 million bushels less. To this excess surplus is to be added the Russian carry-over, which I believe is estimated to be only 40 million bushels. We should be thankful for that. It is difficult to get the true position of that country's economy, but if there be an exportable surplus from Russia, it will further aggravate the existing unsatisfactory position.

Within the space of ten years, relatively small variations in the total world wheat crops have first halved wheat prices; then doubled them, and now have cut them in half again. It is apparent that wheat prices are subject to wide fluctuations in reaction to comparatively small changes in world production, as is illustrated by movements over the past six or seven years. Excluding Russia, with world crops in the vicinity of 3,500 to 3,600 million bushels, as they were in 1935, 1936 and 1937, prices to Australian farmers rose to the equivalent of a seasonable average of approximately 4s. 6d. f.o.b. per bushel.

During 1932, 1933 and 1934 world production ranged from 3,800 to 3,900 million bushels, and Australian wheat growers received an average price of about 2s. 6d. per bushel. A variation of about 10 per cent. in world harvest appears to occasion a

doubling or halving of prices in the wheat market, peculiarly sensitive as it apparently is to changes in the supply position. In the preceding recent period of low prices, there was substantial absorption of wheat by Oriental countries; but under prevailing conditions prospects of this immediately occurring again appear slight. On the other hand, there is a tendency for Governments to augment stored supplies of cereals, and this may temporarily increase import demands, and cheapness of grain may render its importation into countries subject to exchange control more liberal than it has been of late years. The recent calamitous fall in prices is a very serious thing for a State like Western Australia, which has few resources beyond its primary industries. The effect upon the morale of the wheatgrower, already burdened by three years of drought and crop failure, is particularly serious, and has led to suggestions of a nature which, if acted upon, might still more seriously imperil his welfare. Probably the most serious threat to the wheatgrowing industry in the exporting countries is the planned and protected policy of wheat production in the importing countries. The decline in the import demand is extremely grave, and in a time of good harvests has a very depressing influence on the price of wheat. During the last few years its bad effects have been offset by poor harvests in exporting countries, particularly in North America.

To-day there is much talk of over-production of wheat, just as there was five years ago; but people are apt to forget that, in between, there were three years of under-production, when world harvests were less than world requirements and but for the so-called over-production of earlier years there would have been three years of famine prices. It is very unfortunate that the surplus which depressed prices to low levels from 1931 to 1933, but which was the salvation of a hungry world in 1935, 1936 and 1937, at a time when world harvests were not sufficient to supply world requirements, brought loss and suffering to the wheat-grower and his family. As an insurance against want, a wheat surplus is a necessity; but it is a problem for the farmer, because of the disastrous effects upon his prices and upon his livelihood. It is to effect some adjustment in these disastrous short-term fluctuations that Governments in exporting

countries have formulated schemes to meet what has become a recurring situation.

The United States agricultural administration attacked the problem in two ways—firstly by an organised plan to encourage reduction of acreage to a point which will keep export surpluses on a moderate basis, and secondly by establishing an export surplus board to handle the overflow from what is called "the over-normal granary." The United States Government guarantees her growers who subscribe to the plan under the Agricultural Adjustment Act a minimum price of from 52 to 60 cents at local receiving centres. This works out in our currency to about 3s. 1d. The Government foots the bill for that advance and, should prices rise above the guaranteed levels, growers stand to benefit. In addition, the administration pays the farmer who has reduced his acreage in conformity with the Agricultural Administration Agreement 31 cents bonus on all the wheat he produced from his lessened acreage. Comparatively, the United States farmer is in a bad position.

Canada has also assumed responsibility for the industry. The Dominion Government undertakes to purchase all wheat tendered to the Wheat Board according to grade at up to 80 cents Fort William-Port Arthur basis of delivery, which for top grade is equal to about 60 cents in railway sidings in the prairie provinces. According to grade, these advances will work out in Australian currency at from 2s. 6d. to 3s. per bushel.

The method adopted by the Argentine on previous occasions was to control all overseas exchange and subsidise the wheat industry out of the exchange fund. The Argentine Government has already announced its intention of adopting a similar method during the coming season. The difference between the policies of the Governments of the United States and Canada is that the Dominion Government is interested primarily in maintaining farm income and not in raising prices to consumers either at home or abroad, whereas the United States is giving regard to the maintenance of a continuous and stable supply of agricultural commodities adequate to meet consumers' demands at a price fair to producers and consumers. The importing countries, as we all know, have a plan, and those coun-

tries pay farmers up to 10s. a bushel—in our currency—for wheat.

In sharp contradistinction to the declared policies of these Governments is the attitude of the Commonwealth Government of Australia in late years. In times of low prices—in the years 1932-33 to 1935-36—the Commonwealth Government assisted the wheat-growing industry, furnishing a substantial amount to be paid by way of a bounty. This State has also contributed very largely to the relief of the wheatgrower by the readjustment of debts and revaluation of land values. The relief given amounts to millions of pounds; and, in addition, the State during the last four or five years, to enable settlers to carry on, has made further advances in the way of sustenance and other requirements to an amount exceeding half a million pounds. The farmers' claim is that they are entitled to a home consumption price for agricultural commodities because of the effect of the tariff, from which source Commonwealth revenue receives by far its greatest contribution.

Whilst I appreciate the assistance given by the Commonwealth in the past, I cannot understand the attitude taken up by the present Federal Government that droughts and farmers' problems in respect to prices are not in any way the responsibility of that Government, but are matters entirely for the States. This is not an attack on the Federal Government; it is merely a statement of facts; and the House would be ill-advised to question that statement, since it would be wrong for any Commonwealth Government to take up the position that it is in no sense responsible for what happens in the State.

The primary industries provide by far the greatest proportion of export, and also provide almost the whole of the market for the secondary industries. If any one of the primary industries, which include mining and forestry as well as agricultural and pastoral, is allowed to collapse, the repercussions following upon such a calamity will have a marked effect on the prosperity of the Commonwealth and on Commonwealth revenues. The last census disclosed that the agricultural and pastoral industries employ more persons than the manufacturing industries; and, personally, I refuse to accept the view that in a time of calamity the National Government has no responsibility. The Commonwealth Government is the only Austra-

lian Government that has power under the Constitution to meet a situation such as that which has now arisen in the wheatgrowing industry; the failure of the marketing referendum of a few years ago did not in any way affect that authority.

The legislation now being introduced is the result of a conference of Premiers held in Sydney on the 26th August last. The objects of that conference were—

To assist farmers to weather a period of low prices.

To produce a scheme which would give greater stability to the industry, and, as far as possible, to preserve it from violent price fluctuations.

At the conference, I submitted a number of motions, the principles of which were that a stabilised price for wheat used in Australia should not be fixed at a rate which would increase the price of bread beyond sixpence per two-pound loaf. Consistently with this, there should be a stabilised price to the grower for all wheat purchased from him; and this price should be fixed at 3s. 10d. per bushel f.o.r. or 3s. 4d. per bushel at the siding. Whenever the export parity price of wheat fell below 3s. 10d. per bushel f.o.r., the wheatgrower should be entitled to receive the difference between the export parity price and 3s. 10d. per bushel, the payment to be made out of a fund established by Commonwealth legislation and consisting of moneys contributed partly by way of excise and partly by the Commonwealth.

The majority of the conference felt that any special grant from the Commonwealth as a bounty, or to implement any equalisation fund created by a home consumption price, would not be forthcoming and after a full discussion affirmed the need for action being taken to insure wheatgrowers a payable price for their product. It was resolved that, as a first step, the Governments of the Commonwealth and the States should take immediate action to implement a home consumption price plan for the season 1938-39, based on a levy on wheat or flour used for home consumption collected under the excise powers of the Commonwealth. An agreement was also arrived at that a stable home consumption price of flour and bread in the various States should be ensured at a level fair to both producer and consumer, based on a home consumption price of 4s. 8d. per bushel for wheat at country sidings, or its equivalent at the ports. This does not

mean that the farmer will get 4s. 8d. per bushel for his crop. What is intended is that, for the wheat required for flour for local consumption, the miller shall pay the equivalent of 4s. 8d. at country sidings, and that the difference between that amount and the export parity shall be collected by excise and paid into a fund from which the farmer will receive a bonus payable on the whole of his saleable wheat.

Any legislation by the States would be ineffective without Commonwealth action. As a result of a conference between the Premiers and the Prime Minister at Canberra, the Commonwealth Government agreed, subject to the States initiating legislation, to introduce a measure that will, in effect, provide for an excise duty on flour locally consumed, and the creation of an equalisation fund from which a bounty, on a basis to be determined by the Commonwealth Government, will be paid to the wheatgrower.

The Bill before the House is the result of that agreement, and the Crown Law authorities of all the States have conferred and agreed upon its main principles, which I understand are satisfactory to the Commonwealth Government. This measure empowers the Governor to fix minimum and maximum selling prices for flour and all wheat products, that is, bread, bran and pollard and any other declared wheat products. The Governor, in fixing maximum and minimum prices, may fix the price having regard to certain factors, but it is laid down that he may not fix a price for "best baker's" flour at less than £11 per ton, or more than £13 10s. per ton, delivered on the buyer's premises at Perth in bags containing approximately 150 lbs. in weight.

The definition of flour is set out in the Bill but does not include any substance for use as or in the manufacture of breakfast foods. Wheat for birds and livestock is also exempted. Neither does the measure provide for the fixing of prices for flour or any other substance sold for export from Australia. To carry out the intention of the Bill, and provide for its administration, power is taken for the appointment of what is termed a "Wheat Products Prices Committee," consisting of a chairman and two members to be appointed by the Governor. The committee will have the responsibility of recommending to the Governor the maximum and minimum prices for any wheat commodity

in any portion of the State, and, for the purpose of obtaining the fullest information, will have the powers of a Royal Commission under the Royal Commissioners' Powers Act, 1902.

The prices fixed may vary having regard to (a) the place of delivery to the buyer; (b) the locality of the State in which the substance is sold or delivered; (c) the quantities in which the substance is sold; (d) whether the substance is sold by wholesale or retail; (e) the nature of the bags, packages or containers in which the substance is sold; (f) the quality, grade or variety of the substance; and (g) any other matters or circumstances.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Are not these variations somewhat elastic?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The matter can be discussed in Committee. Where a proclamation has been issued fixing the price of flour, any person who sells flour at a price less than the minimum or greater than the maximum will be committing an offence. Similarly, any person who sells bread or any other wheat produce below the minimum price or over the maximum price when prices have been so fixed, will also be committing an offence and the penalties are substantial.

The Governor may, from time to time, revoke or vary a proclamation by subsequent proclamation; and it will be possible for the Governor in any such proclamation to exempt from the price-fixing clauses of the Bill any substance that may be exempted from flour tax under the provisions of any Commonwealth legislation. Beyond allowing for the distribution to wheatgrowers of any moneys granted to the State by the Commonwealth, no provision is made in this Bill for the amount that shall be paid to wheatgrowers as a bonus, nor as to the manner in which it shall be paid. That is a matter entirely for the Commonwealth legislation and Commonwealth direction.

Briefly, this Bill provides for the fixing of a minimum and maximum price of flour to enable the Commonwealth to impose a levy as if wheat for local consumption was purchased at 4s. 8d. per bushel at the siding; the exemption of export wheat; the exemption of wheats used for livestock and birds and for the manufacture of certain foods; and the creation of a price-fixing authority to regulate prices not only of flour but of bread, and all other wheat pro-

ducts not covered by the exemptions referred to. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. G. Latham, debate adjourned.

### **BILL—FREMANTLE GAS AND COKE COMPANY'S ACT AMENDMENT.**

Returned from the Council without amendment.

### **BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 3).**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 1st November.

**MR. DONEY** (Williams - Narrogin) [5.23]: One or two minor explanations may be required of the Minister, otherwise, from what I can determine from my own observations and knowledge, and from inquiries I have made in interested quarters, the provisions of the measure are such as have been asked for in recent years by the Road Boards Association. So far as I can gather, no controversial matter has been added. No misgivings need arise in the minds of members as to anything that may be contained in the Bill; on the contrary, we should feel glad that the weaknesses that have been apparent in the Act for many years are to be deleted. Under the Bill the terminal day for road board membership falls on the same day as does the elections. That has not been so in the past. The fact that these two happenings have occurred on different days has been somewhat of a nuisance, and road boards everywhere are pleased at the change foreshadowed in the measure. Another amendment to the Act precludes a road board candidate from witnessing absentee votes. The proposal is a proper one, and no one is likely to grumble at it. Another desirable amendment is with respect to those instances where there happens to be an equality of votes for the election of chairman or vice-chairman. In such instances the Minister will, according to this Bill, be able to exercise his right to appoint a chairman. Quite a number of successive road board conferences have asked the Minister to shoulder that responsibility, and he has decided to do so. By interjection the member for Wagin

(Mr. Stubbs), when the Minister was speaking, questioned where the knowledge of the qualifications of members for the chairmanship would be obtained. The department has a fairly intimate acquaintance with the personnel of nearly all boards, so that the Minister is quite the proper authority to exercise this choice. The Bill contains other amendments to the Act but they are chiefly of a machinery nature. I do not think any of them is likely to be objected to. Another amendment gives the road boards the right to put down traffic by-passes in addition to gates, or in lieu of gates, according to what is required by the situation that arises. The board may issue licenses to the owner of the property on either side of the road. In all these instances the work would have to be done to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Main Roads. No one is likely to object to that. Some slight differences of opinion may arise with regard to one or two amendments at the tail end of the measure, but these are not of sufficient consequence to be dealt with now and may be left until we reach the Committee stage. I see no objection to any part of the Bill and invite the House to support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Sleeman in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Amendment of Section 38:

**MR. WATTS:** It seems to me, if it is intended that members representing wards shall be elected as they are elected now, it will be necessary to have a separate ratepayers' list for each ward, so that voting for ward members may take place. Unless there is a satisfactory explanation, I do not propose to support the clause.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The effect of the amendment will be that there will be one list for the whole of the electoral district instead of separate lists for each ward. Under the Act it is obligatory to take out the list of all the ratepayers, and then separate lists for the several wards. With the one list, the name of the ratepayer will be recorded, the ward in which he lives or has property, and there will also be



noted the number of votes that the elector can cast. The local authorities themselves have asked for this amendment, as it will save expense in printing, and will be more convenient for them. The matter was discussed at a road board conference, and the request submitted accordingly.

Mr. DONEY: During the week-end I discussed this particular matter with interested parties, and I received the same explanation as that furnished by the Minister. The avoidance of the necessity to make up separate rolls for the wards will work for added convenience and less expense.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What expense will be saved?

Mr. DONEY: Expense will be saved on account of the extra rolls that will not be made up, and that will save so much for printing.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Rolls are not printed; they are typed.

Mr. DONEY: I admit that the saving in expense will not be a great item. As this amendment has been requested by the road board conference, the proposal should be regarded as reasonably satisfactory.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The one roll will be less workable. The rolls have to be made up from the rate-books, and there are separate rate-books for each ward. If the amendment be agreed to, the names of ratepayers will have to be taken out in alphabetical order from the various rate-books, and some indication will have to be given as to the ward for which each ratepayer is entitled to vote. Many people in the metropolitan area do not know in which ward they live. Difficulty will be experienced should the people, for instance, in the east ward be called upon to vote on the question of raising a loan for that ward. No separate list of the east ward ratepayers will be available. I think the road boards are making a mistake in asking for this amendment, and it will be useless asking Parliament next session to repeal this legislation. I do not think the local authorities have given enough consideration to the matter. The Minister has not indicated where the saving will be made.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Act makes it obligatory for a road board to prepare each year a list of the owners of ratable land within the board's district.

Then the next subsection, which we propose to strike out, sets out that separate lists must be made for each ward. The proposal means that the road boards will have to make out one complete list of ratepayers instead of a number. How many wards would there be in an average road board district?

Hon. C. G. Latham: There would not be more than six in any road board district.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then, instead of having to make out the one complete list and also six separate ward lists, the board will now be required to prepare the one list only, and on that list will appear particulars regarding the ward in which the ratepayer is entitled to exercise the franchise, and the number of votes he will be entitled to cast. The proposed method will be more simple and less expensive.

Mr. Patriek: If a man is qualified to vote in more than one ward, he will have to decide in respect of which ward he will exercise his right to vote.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, and the list will enable the returning officer to decide how many votes the ratepayer is entitled to cast. The road boards themselves have asked for this amendment, but if the Committee desires to reject it, I shall not turn a hair.

Mr. WATTS: The Minister contends that the amendment will make the matter much easier for the road boards but at present the names are taken from the ward rate books and placed in the separate ward lists. Under the proposed new system, the names will have to be taken from the ward rate books, arranged in alphabetical order, and set out in the one complete list. It will be necessary to indicate against each ratepayer's name and the ward in which he is entitled to vote, and the number of votes he is entitled to cast. That will be necessary for the information of the returning officer. If that proves easier than the present method, I shall be surprised. Considerable divergence of opinion is bound to arise about this matter, and I think it will cause a lot of confusion.

Clause put and passed.

Chauses 5, 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Amendment of Section 65:

Mr. SEWARD: The Minister should give consideration to the wording of the clause,

which is rather difficult to follow. If the amendment be agreed to, Subsection 3, of Section 65, as amended, will read—

No person who acts as returning officer at any election shall be or become a candidate at such election or a person appointed by the Minister to take absentee votes in relation thereto, unless before taking such absentee votes he relinquishes his said appointment.

That seems most extraordinary drafting.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The words must be in the wrong place.

Mr. SEWARD: I could understand the amendment if it were split up so that the subsection as amended would read—

No person who acts as returning officer at any election or person appointed by the Minister to take absentee votes in relation to the election unless before taking any such absentee votes he relinquishes his said appointment shall be or become a candidate at such election.

Mr. Doney: The meaning is plain.

Mr. CROSS: Members on the Government back benches are at a disadvantage inasmuch as all the copies of the Act have been made available to Opposition members. We are not able to appreciate the effect of the amendment. I have three or four road boards in my district, and I am afraid I must ask you, Mr. Chairman, to read the sections, together with the amendments, so that we may have some idea of the alterations to be effected. I could not follow the member for Pingelly in his reading of the section and the amendment. Members on the back benches are having a very rough spin.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This clause deals with a person entitled to take absentee votes. Subsection 3 of Section 65 provides that no person who acts as a returning officer at any election shall be or become a candidate at such election, and the words proposed to be added will similarly exclude a person appointed to take absentee votes, unless he first relinquishes that appointment. If the intention is not clearly expressed, the clause will have to be amended. I move—

That the further consideration of the clause be postponed.

Motion (postponement) put and passed.

Clause 8—agreed to.

Clause 9—Amendment of Section 149:

Mr. WATTS: The local authority would be well equipped with the necessary infor-

mation and knowledge of the district's requirements to deal with the matter of erecting gates and motor traffic passes without having to approach the Commissioner of Main Roads. I move an amendment—

That in the proposed new subsection (2a) the words "Commissioner of Main Roads" be struck out with a view to inserting the word "board" in lieu.

Mr. DONEY: I can understand that there might not be too many main roads on pastoral or grazing leases. Under Clause 11 the Commissioner of Main Roads is named as the person to determine what is a suitable motor-traffic pass, and it would hardly be desirable to have him determining the matter in one part of the State, and someone else in another part. To have uniformity would be better than leaving the decision to various boards.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Section 192 empowers a board to grant permission to erect a gate. A local body could not erect gates, and we propose to increase its power also to the extent that it might erect motor traffic passes. By an amendment to the Main Roads Act, the Commissioner can be authorised to erect a gate or by-pass in any road that he controls. A question has been raised whether the Commissioner of Main Roads is a suitable authority to approve of the type of by-pass to be adopted. Someone of engineering experience is necessary. I have seen by-passes that were very dangerous. The Commissioner would consult the road board and thus the board would have the advantage of his experience and advice.

Mr. Doney: You could not lay down one standard type.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. The relations existing between the Commissioner and the road boards are amicable, and his advice is sought. Furthermore, his engineers have greater knowledge than have many of the road board engineers, and the Commissioner, if desired, would make available the services of his district engineers. These by-passes need to be supervised to prevent their being placed in dangerous positions. There is also a legal responsibility to be considered. To have the type determined by the Commissioner would be preferable to having 150 local authorities throughout the State dealing with the matter.

Mr. WATTS: I agree that the Commissioner of Main Roads and his engineers are

of the utmost assistance to local authorities, but the Minister has lost sight of the fact that Section 149 provides that when a board has resumed land to make a road, it must fence the land if requested by the owner so to do, provided that if the land enclosed is held on pastoral lease or for pastoral and grazing purposes only, the board may, instead of erecting fencing, erect gates in the fences through which a road is required to pass. Now it is to be given authority, in lieu of erecting gates, to construct by-passes. This is not a question of main roads. The great majority of by-passes or gates would be erected on side roads of relatively little importance. In such circumstances the intrusion of the Commissioner of Main Roads into the work of local authorities is unnecessary.

Mr. SAMPSON: I support the clause. The Commissioner of Main Roads is the best authority to determine the type of by-pass. Different districts have varying needs. Therefore I favour giving authority to the Commissioner of Main Roads. The subject abounds with difficulties. Different boards hold different views. Someone with considerable experience of the subject should determine the most suitable motor traffic passes. If the best service is to be provided, the Commissioner should be retained. Road boards throughout the State would support that view.

Mr. MARSHALL: I can agree with the Minister, and also with the mover of the amendment; and, further, I can disagree with both. The member for Swan has only a small electorate conveniently close to the office of the Main Roads Board. My electorate begins about 600 miles from Perth. I agree with the mover of the amendment that if a road board in my electorate decided upon a road and gazetted it, that might be a road which the Commissioner of Main Roads would know all about. But before erecting a by-pass, the local authority would have to send plans and specifications to the Commissioner, and await his instructions as to the design and the material to be used. Road Boards in my electorate frequently and joyfully accept advice from the Commissioner and his local engineers; but if the Commissioner is to be asked to design every by-pass and specify the material to be used, he will have no time to do anything else.

Mr. Sampson: There would be certain types of instructions for various types of local boards.

Mr. MARSHALL: If the proposed power applied only to main roads, over which the Commissioner has sole jurisdiction, I would not hesitate to support the Minister; but that is not the case. The power would apply to every road constructed by a local authority. In the wide open spaces of the North-West and the Murchison, the purpose of the amendment will be appreciated. Engineers representing the Commissioner of Main Roads are not always available, though undoubtedly they have done a deal of good work. What the clause proposes is not practicable. Moreover, engineers of local authorities would be placed in the invidious position of having to proceed by guess-work. In well-developed sheep areas there are gates or passes every three or four miles on a road. For instance, between Meekatharra and Wiluna, a distance of 115 miles, there are about 33 by-passes. While wishing to help the Minister, I see much virtue in the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What will take place under Clause 9 has not quite been grasped. The local authority is now empowered to permit any person to put in a by-pass. Then the Commissioner of Main Roads comes in. The new subsection to be inserted after Section 2 of Section 149 does not mean that every by-pass will have to be approved by the Commissioner, but only that the design and the material will have to be approved by him. Every road board would be supplied with particulars of what is required by the Commissioner, who would get out standard designs suitable for various localities. This provision deals only with design and material. It will not be a case of waiting months for approval. Moreover, the road boards would derive advantage from by-passes not being put in higgledy-piggledy. The Commissioner's approval having been obtained, the local authority would know what type of by-pass to put in. The design and the material would have been approved by the Commissioner. There would be no limitation to particular materials. Old railway irons are used in some districts. Various kinds of timber, in some cases local timber, could be used. The suggestion that months or even weeks would elapse before approval was obtained of a little by-pass is ridiculous. The object is to

ensure safety, and local authorities should be thankful that the Commissioner accepts that responsibility. He would have regard to the traffic to be accommodated.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Mr. MARSHALL: In my electorate there are 200 by-passes at least in one road district. If the Commissioner of Main Roads is to be the deciding authority and by-passes must be constructed to his design, must the existing by-passes be abandoned and by-passes to the design of the Commissioner substituted? When the late Mr. McCallum introduced the Bill for the parent Act, it contained a similar provision. Another place, however, deemed the provision to be unwise and deleted it. Again, is the pastoralist to be responsible for replacing existing by-passes with by-passes constructed to the Commissioner's design? Surely, the matter could be left to the discretion of the local governing authorities. In the course of years, by-passes, owing to the action of vehicular traffic, become washaways. When this happens, the by-passes could be constructed in a better position and to the design of the Commissioner. I should like to know the Minister's opinion of the existing by-passes.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Bill simply provides that the Commissioner of Main Roads shall prepare and issue specifications for by-passes. If by-passes are not erected in accordance with such specifications and an accident occurs, then whoever constructed them would be responsible. The Commissioner of Main Roads will not supervise the construction of by-passes; it is not suggested that even the district engineer shall do so. The Commissioner's sole responsibility will be to provide the specifications.

Mr. Doney: No, he would also approve the completed work.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, he would have nothing to do with the completed work.

Mr. Doney: What does the word "approval" imply? It must apply to the completed work.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It applies to the specifications. Many roads in the North-West are not proclaimed, so no difficulty will arise there.

Mr. Marshall: The provision applies to a gazetted road.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. I assume the Commissioner or his officials will act in a commonsense manner; and if it were reported that a by-pass was unsafe, the attention of the road board would be called to it. If an existing by-pass were quite safe, but constructed perhaps not in accordance with the Commissioner's design, he would not insist upon its being pulled up and a new one constructed. The object of the Bill is to ensure that by-passes are properly constructed and safe for traffic. If we are to accept responsibility for by-passes, should they not be built up to a standard? Without in any way belittling road board secretaries, who also are engineers, I suggest the proper authority in this case should be the Commissioner of Main Roads and his engineers. A by-pass is an obstruction; there is no doubt as to that, and so it should be constructed to a proper design. The Commissioner of Main Roads and his officers have the necessary experience to ensure that by-passes will be properly constructed of the best materials.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The matter is of importance to road boards. Section 149 of the parent Act provides that in areas used for pastoral and grazing purposes a road board may erect fences or gates. The amendment provides that motor by-passes may be constructed as well as gates.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment is to strike out the words "Commissioner of Main Roads."

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: This is a matter which surely can be left to the local authority. We should not bring in the Commissioner of Main Roads. One or two attempts have been made recently to whittle away the powers of local authorities. What is the use of constituting local authorities if they are not empowered to act? The Minister inquired who was the right authority. I should say the local road authority, not the Commissioner of Main Roads. Why should we ask the Commissioner of Main Roads to submit a specification for the construction of a motor traffic by-pass when we do not ask him to submit a specification for a culvert, bridge or road? There is no more risk to traffic on a motor traffic by-pass than there is on a road or culvert or bridge. The local authority that has had experience in the construction of roads, cul-

verts and bridges has a far greater knowledge of the local conditions than the Commissioner can have. Again, a specification that the Commissioner would submit for a by-pass on the Murchison might be entirely unsuitable for one in the south-western portion of the State.

Mr. Doney: He would not insist on the same type of by-pass all over the State.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I did not suggest that; but how often Government departments lose sight of local conditions is well known. No one is better able to say what is required to meet local conditions than the people elected by local residents.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am not satisfied with the Minister's explanation. If I were asked to name a person capable of preparing specifications I would unhesitatingly suggest the Commissioner of Main Roads, but in this instance, if the Commissioner does design the by-passes, the local authorities will still be responsible for damages in the event of accidents occurring.

Mr. Doney: If negligence can be proved.

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not know about that. All I know is that one man is to be given power to instruct the local authority to do a certain job; yet if an accident occurs after the job is completed the local authority is responsible for damages. Further, as the member for Irwin-Moore has pointed out, a by-pass that might suit one portion of the State might not be suitable for another portion. The local authorities on the Murchison have for years defied the law, and installed hundreds of by-passes; yet I do not know of one accident having occurred. All sorts of designs have been adopted during the last ten years, and the fact that no accident has occurred speaks well for the ability of local authorities to design by-passes suitable for the various districts.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I suggest that the amendment be withdrawn, and another amendment moved to the effect that after the word "description" in line 4 of the proposed new subsection, the words "as shall be prescribed" be inserted. Then there will be laid down by general regulation the description of the by-passes and there will be no need for an application to the Commissioner. The real danger is that while the Commissioner may design a by-pass, the road board will be responsible in the event of any acci-

dent, although it has had no say in the planning of the by-pass.

Mr. Seward: Why not substitute "road board" for "Commissioner"?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Why put in "road board" at all? The road board would be responsible without the insertion of those words.

Mr. Watts: Delete paragraph (b) and be done with it.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: There could be a uniform design for by-passes. There is no danger in the erection of by-passes, except that the planks might be too narrow. Some people think they can take these by-passes at 60 or 70 miles an hour, but if somebody came to grief, the local authorities would be liable. With by-passes there are gates.

Mr. Marshall: You must have them.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes. The by-passes are for motor vehicles, and nothing else.

Mr. Marshall: Horse-driver vehicles can go over some of them.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: If that is so, cattle could not be prevented from crossing them. I have never seen one that an animal could cross. The simplest way to overcome the difficulty is to allow the road board to lay down a design after consulting the Public Works Department.

Mr. DOUST: Throughout the State there are thousands of by-passes, and if an accident occurred—the reason is immaterial—the local authorities would be liable. That we should have uniform by-passes seems right. I do not mean by-passes of exactly the same construction; by-passes of stronger make could be installed where there is heavy traffic, and lighter by-passes could be provided on other roads. Unless local authorities are given power to construct by-passes, the authorities in installing them are placing obstructions on the road, and they are liable for damages in the event of accident. Though I have every confidence in the Commissioner of Main Roads, I think the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition is a fair one. There are at least 50 by-passes on one road in my electorate. Some are certainly too narrow, and to overcome that, uniform general by-laws or regulations should be adopted.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The practice has grown up of putting in by-passes. It is proposed now to legalise the construction of by-passes on roads. How

can this be done with safety? We must go to the highest official in the State, and he considers it will be safe to make the practice general, provided that some specification of which he approves is carried out. Therefore when the various local authorities ask for permission to construct by-passes we are prepared to give them the necessary power on terms that are set out. No one has suggested that the Commissioner of Main Roads will be unreasonable. We must have the best authority to say how by-passes are to be constructed. Many that are already built are unsafe; they are too narrow, and some certainly should never have been put on a road. What it is proposed to do now will be of advantage to the road boards.

Mr. MARSHALL: What would have happened had another place in 1925 not deleted this provision from the Bill submitted in that year? There was no Main Roads Commission at that time. On that occasion the Assembly agreed that we should permit or legalise the construction of by-passes by local authorities, and to allow the local bodies to have complete jurisdiction over the design and direction. Now, after 13 years, it becomes essential to make the suggested alteration, even though the local authorities have designed and erected by-passes, and not one accident that I know of has taken place. If there has been an accident then it must surely have been the fault of the driver. It was never intended that an independent party should prepare the specifications and then make the local bodies responsible for damages that might follow as a result of an accident. The Minister can easily get over the difficulty if he is not too great a stickler for the departmental view. He seems to feel that an obligation is cast upon him to agree to what the department advances. It is unjust to throw upon the local bodies the responsibility for any accident that may occur at a by-pass, the specification of which was prepared by an independent party altogether.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	17
Noes	..	..	..	..	21
—					
Majority against	..	..	..	..	4
—					

## AYES.

Mr. Boyle  
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver  
Mr. Ferguson  
Mr. Hill  
Mr. Latham  
Mr. Marshall  
Mr. McDonald  
Mr. Patrick  
Mr. Seward

Mr. Shearn  
Mr. J. M. Smith  
Mr. Thorn  
Mr. Warner  
Mr. Watts  
Mr. Welsh  
Mr. Willmott  
Mr. McLarty  
(Teller.)

## NOES.

Mr. Coverley  
Mr. Cross  
Mr. Doust  
Mr. Hawke  
Mr. Hegney  
Miss Holman  
Mr. Lambert  
Mr. Leahy  
Mr. Millington  
Mr. Nulsen  
Mr. Panton

Mr. Sampson  
Mr. F. C. L. Smith  
Mr. Styants  
Mr. Tonkin  
Mr. Troy  
Mr. Willcock  
Mr. Wilson  
Mr. Wise  
Mr. Withers  
Mr. Doney  
(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. DONEY: Will the Minister indicate whether a motor traffic by-pass can be regarded as including a cattle pass? The Minister drew distinction between a by-pass and a run-through, and said that a run-through might easily have no cattle pass. The Minister should make it clear whether a motor by-pass means a cattle stop as well?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, it does.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 10 to 14 agreed to.

Clause 15—Amendment of Section 328:

Mr. DOUST: The amendment deals with advertising a road board balance sheet. In the present Act the board has the privilege of advertising it in the local newspaper at a cost of £2 10s., or sending it out through the post by letter to each ratepayer. Now it is proposed to cut out the right to advertise in a newspaper usually circulating in the district. I do not know what benefit either the road board or the ratepayer will derive from such an amendment. A balance sheet could just as readily be sent through the post if desired, as advertised in a newspaper. I admit that in outback districts where no newspapers are printed, publication in the "Government Gazette" would probably overcome the difficulty; but it is altogether wrong to prevent a road board from using the local newspaper, or the post if that should be considered preferable. The clause would have the effect of forcing local authorities to publish their balance sheets in the "Government Gazette," the cost of which would be 30s.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The proposal is to limit the expenditure in this connection to £2 10s., which is considerably

less than the cost of publication in a local newspaper.

Mr. DONEY: What would be the cost of publication in the "Government Gazette"?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The cost would be 30s. Once the matter is published in the "Government Gazette," the local authority can get any number of "pulls," and post them to the ratepayers. This clause has been drafted in the interests of economy.

Mr. WATTS: A local authority at present has the option of advertising in a newspaper at a cost not exceeding £2 10s., or sending the matter by post to the ratepayers. No limit is placed on the cost of printing or postage. By this clause road boards are invited to use the "Government Gazette" at a cost of 30s. Why should they not be permitted to support the local printing establishments? I see no reason for the clause. I move an amendment—

That the words "a newspaper usually circulating in the district" be struck out.

If the amendment were carried the local authority could then either use a newspaper in which to advertise its balance sheet, or send copies through the post to its ratepayers.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The amendment is foolish. The Perth Road Board has hundreds of ratepayers and it would not be convenient for it to use the post. The cheapest medium for a local authority to use is the "Government Gazette." I have no wish to impose further costs upon any local authority when some of them are at their wits' end to meet their accounts. Far better is it to show them how publication can be effected at a cost of less than £2 10s.

Mr. DOUST: We should retain the present section of the Act, and merely add to it the words "or 'Government Gazette.'" That would entirely overcome the difficulty.

Mr. CROSS: Local authorities might as well place a notice on a tree as publish it in the "Government Gazette." It would be just as effective if the balance sheet were nailed to the door of the road board office. The original section should be left as it is with the addition of the words "or 'Government Gazette.'" If a road board had an unsatisfactory balance sheet, it would not mind publishing it in the "Government Gazette," where it would not be seen.

The Minister for Works: I have no objection to the suggestion of the member for Nelson.

Mr. WATTS: I do not see how that suggestion could be adopted with the clause as we now have it. Local authorities find the post a more satisfactory way of notifying their ratepayers than to advertise in a newspaper, but they should be given the option of adopting one course or the other. My amendment will not cause a local authority to spend more money than it is now spending. My objection is to its being made compulsory for a road board to use the "Government Gazette."

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The section should be allowed to remain as it is. The statement of accounts belongs to the ratepayers, who have a right to see it. If it is published in the "Government Gazette," very few of them will see it. That particular medium is also a costly one. The rates for advertising in the "Government Gazette" are 5s. for the first eight lines and 6d. for every additional line. To print the balance sheet of a road board on one page would be difficult, and I understand a page advertisement would cost at least £5 10s.

The Minister for Works: One road board secretary said it cost 30s.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: If a member of a road board gave that information, I accept his word.

The Minister for Agriculture: The member for Swan is associated with a road board.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not think he prints anything in the "Government Gazette"! After all, the balance sheet is a matter of concern to the ratepayers only and is not of interest to the general public. Not more than one person in every thousand reads the "Government Gazette."

Mr. DONEY: Perhaps the member for Katanning would consider withdrawing his amendment if another were moved to insert the words "or by advertisement in the 'Government Gazette.'" That would leave it optional for the road board.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Strike the lot out, and leave the section as it is.

Amendment put and passed.

Clause, as amended, put and negatived.

Clause 16—agreed to.

Postponed Clause 7—Amendment of Section 65:

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Minister promised that he would look into the effect of this clause.

Progress reported.

## BILL—LIGHTS (NAVIGATION PROTECTION).

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 3rd November.

**MR. PATRICK** (Greenough) [8.35]: Briefly stated, the Bill proposes to give port authorities power to control shore lights that may endanger navigation and so imperil the safety of shipping. As the Minister pointed out, the necessity has arisen for legislation because of the installation of numerous neon signs and other advertisements that confuse master mariners when entering a harbour. In the Eastern States legislation of a similar description has been necessitated, and actual instances have occurred of mistakes being made, through the confusion of lights, by masters of vessels when entering harbours. As the present tendency to use these lights represents an increasing danger, the importance of passing legislation before accidents occur will be admitted. I support the second reading of the Bill.

**HON. N. KEENAN** (Nedlands) [8.36]: The Commonwealth Parliament has already passed legislation dealing with this subject. Some of the provisions in the Bill are almost identical with sections of the Commonwealth Navigation Act and, in the main, all are identical. Under Section 51 of the Constitution Act, power is given the Commonwealth by the States to deal with navigation and with all matters connected with navigation. The Federal Parliament has done so. Although I have not the Commonwealth Act before me at the moment, I know it actually provides legislation similar to that outlined in the Bill. The Commonwealth has power to compel the removal of any light that is dangerous to navigation, to prescribe the hours during which such lights may be exhibited, and one of the main provisions of the Bill is identical with a section in the Commonwealth Act. Is any useful purpose served in duplicating such ac-

tion? Has there been a request to the State to supplement the powers of the Commonwealth Government, or are we merely filling in time and passing legislation that is wholly unnecessary? If we pass the Bill and it becomes an Act, to the extent that its provisions coincide with the Commonwealth Act, we shall merely reiterate what has been agreed to by the Federal Parliament. To the extent that our Act is in conflict with or contradicts the Commonwealth Act, our legislation will be absolute void. In the circumstances, I would like the Minister to explain whether a request has been made to the State to supplement the Commonwealth legislation in this matter, which would be rather absurd, or are we merely discussing the Bill because there is nothing else to do?

**THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE** (Hon. F. C. L. Smith—Brownhill-Ivanhoe—in reply) [8.39]: A request has been made for this legislation.

Hon. N. Keenan: By whom?

**THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE**: The Bill will give power to port authorities who control various harbours within the State to take necessary action regarding lights that affect navigation and are a source of danger to shipping because of the confusion arising between leading lights and shore lights. While the Commonwealth Parliament may have passed legislation of a similar nature, which can be made effective if necessary or if the Federal Government so desires, apparently it has not been made effective. As the member for Greenough (Mr. Patrick) pointed out, other States have passed similar legislation.

Hon. N. Keenan: Which States?

**THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE**: Victoria has passed similar legislation. I am not in a position to tell the House what the actual constitutional position is regarding Commonwealth and State legislation in connection with navigation. What I do know is that, despite the Commonwealth legislation, the necessity for action by the State has arisen.

Mr. Marshall: Could the Commonwealth legislate with regard to the position in inner harbours?

**THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE**: Commonwealth legislation may not even apply to harbours.

Mr. Marshall: I mean when once the vessels have entered a harbour. Would it be



possible for the Commonwealth to control river navigation?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I cannot say.

Mr. Marshall: Of course, it would not.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Off hand I cannot say what are the constitutional powers of the Commonwealth Parliament with regard to navigation, but there is evidence of necessity for legislation along the proposed lines. The Bill has come to this Chamber from the Upper House and was introduced at the instance of the harbour authorities, who should be some guide as to the necessity for it and should have some knowledge of the constitutional position. Evidently the necessity for the legislation exists despite Commonwealth legislation on the subject.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1938-39.

#### *In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 3rd November: Mr. Sleeman in the Chair.

*Vote—Mines, \$144,570:*

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES** (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [8.45]: This is the one industry that continues to be prosperous. In fact, it is going ahead so quietly and well that there is little need to say much about it. The mining industry during 1937 realised £9,279,441 Australian currency. From 3,039,608 tons of ore, 1,007,289 fine ounces of gold were won, valued at £8,796,990. It is certain that the figures for 1938 will be still better. During the ten months ended the 31st October, 1938, we obtained 951,459 fine ounces of gold compared with 809,976 for the first ten months of last year, an increase this year of 141,483 fine ounces. The value for the ten months of 1938 was £8,367,945 compared £7,086,924 for the corresponding period of last year, an increase of £1,281,021 for the ten months of this year. I think that without doubt there will be a record production, at least in value, for the present calendar year; the estimate exceeds £10,000,000. Base metals improved during 1937, the value being £482,451. The dividends paid by companies in 1937 totalled £1,213,529.

The price of gold, as members know, has risen considerably during the past months. Last year it averaged £8 14s. 8d. per ounce; to-day it is over £9 per ounce. The average number of men employed in the industry in 1937 was 17,139, which undoubtedly has had a great effect in keeping down the number of unemployed. Every proclaimed goldfield in the State last year recorded some production, with the East Coolgardie field as the premier area. All the large companies on the Golden Mile worked profitably and developed reserves. The Big Bell, which is proving to be a fine asset to the State, commenced production, and now treats 35,000 tons monthly. Norseman, Wiluna, Sons of Gwalia, Mt. Magnet, Yonambi and the Yellowdine mines are all active producers. The following were the main companies that first produced in 1937:—Emu Gold Mines (Lawlers), Big Bell (Cue), Riverina Gold Mines, Spargo's Reward Gold Mines (near Coolgardie), Blue Bird Gold Mines (Norseman), and the Edna May Amalgamated (Westonia). The position of base metals improved, the main metals mined having been tantalite, tin, asbestos and lead. A greater interest has been shown in mining in the North-West, especially in the Pilbara field. The development of the iron ore deposits at Yampi Sound received a severe setback when the Commonwealth embargo was imposed.

The State battery system continued to provide its excellent facilities for the benefit of the State. Erection and reconstruction cost £17,879, while £2,623 was spent on repairs. New plants were opened at Laverton, Ora Banda and Coolgardie, and a further 5-head of stamps was added to the Kalgoorlie plants. During 1937, these plants treated 102,800 tons for 72,233 fine ounces. Approval has been given to increase the size of the Marble Bar State battery from five to ten head. The additional activity in that area has rendered necessary an increase in the capacity of the battery.

The aerial survey of the northern portion of the State continues, and last year, in addition to the aerial work, the survey geophysically examined the Big Bell, Wiluna, Kookynie and Norseman deposits. Field parties were maintained for the survey and classification of various goldfields. The Government continued its assistance to the industry, and crushing facilities were provided at Hall's Creek, Derby, Roebourne and Ravensthorpe. Assistance for development of pro-

perty was granted, the most notable being for the Tindals Mine at Coolgardie. That mine is expected to open up in a big way and employ a large number of men. Numerous smaller concerns also received help.

Since the inception of the prospecting scheme, 7,162 men have been assisted, and at the present time 746 men are being maintained under the scheme. The crushings by assisted men totalled 47,417 tons of ore for 24,255 ounces of gold, worth approximately £194,000. These men agreed that, as they discovered gold, they would refund a percentage of the assistance received, and the refunds made to date total £32,953. It has been interesting to watch the progress of some of the prospectors who have received assistance. Many of them have, during recent months, done very well for themselves and for the State. One of the outstanding successes, according to the file, was Prospector William Robinson, who had been in receipt of State assistance during the years 1933, 1934, and 1935. During the past few weeks he has recovered over 1,000 ounces at Morley's Find, about five miles north of Riverina, and, of course, has refunded the whole of the amount granted to him by way of assistance.

Another good result has been obtained at the Mayfield Mine, which is situated about 43 miles from Bullfinch, and two miles east of the old Mt. Jackson road. This mine was discovered by a prospector who, although being backed by private funds at the time of the discovery, had been receiving assistance from the Government for a considerable time previously. The mine is held at present on option by the Yellowknife Gold Areas, N.L., for a considerable sum, and the property is said to be developing very satisfactorily. A crushing of 32 tons put through last July resulted in a yield of 49 ounces 15 dwts. over the plates. The State Mining Engineer, who visited the area last month, reports that two underlay shafts, about 165 feet part, had each been sunk to a depth of 80 feet, or thereabouts. The north shaft had entered the sulphides, and the south shaft seemed about to do so. The quartz vein in the north shaft was 30 inches in width, and two samples near the bottom taken during his visit assayed well over 3 ozs. to the ton. The vein in the south shaft was 36 inches in width at the north end and assayed 31.3 dwts. per ton, and at the south end 2.3 dwts. for 12 inches.

We were receiving a fair amount of assistance from the Commonwealth grant for metalliferous mining, but that was discontinued at the end of June of this year, and consequently all those prospectors are being assisted from the mining vote. Still, we have been able to keep 740 men under the prospecting scheme. I do not think there is any doubt that the scheme has been a great success. Not only have the men repaid £32,000 of the assistance received, but they have discovered a large quantity of gold. A number of the assisted prospectors were young men who were previously knocking about Perth and were very diffident about entering a calling of which they had no knowledge.

Mr. Doney: What is the largest number that received assistance at any one time?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The present number is 741 and there are still others going out. Altogether over 7,000 have participated in the scheme. The practice has been to send the men out with an experienced prospector, and when they have become accustomed to the use of the tools and learnt the technicalities of drives, winzes, etc., they acquire more confidence. Many of these men are becoming good miners, and the fact of their having gone out into the back country and engaged in this work has made them good and useful citizens.

Mr. Doney: Are you still receiving many applications?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We are receiving some; we sent out three yesterday. Just as the bells were ringing to-day a man called to see me who said he had worked for me at Peak Hill 35 years ago. He wanted to go prospecting. So the hon. member will realise that age is no bar.

Mr. Doney: In view of the unemployment existing, the wonder is that you have not more applying.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am hopeful that if there is any drift from the farming areas on account of the drought, we shall be able to place some of them under the prospecting scheme.

Mr. Doney: Your colleague's figures indicated an increase.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: But those men have been absorbed. Increased educational facilities were provided at the Kalgoorlie School of Mines. At Wiluna a branch was opened, which continues to be an unqualified success. As I said at the

outset, there is little need to speak at length about the industry, which is working out its own destiny. The industry is prosperous and continues to be the one bright spot in our primary production. I meet quite a lot of gentlemen from the Old Country that know something about mining—they generally pay a courtesy call at the Mines Department—and they, without exception, are very optimistic. Many have come out to look at the properties in which they are interested, and have expressed the opinion that the price of gold will be maintained. So long as the price of gold is maintained the industry will continue to enjoy prosperity. I believe that if the present price continues, production will show a considerable increase. Some of the larger mines are just coming into production. Additional machinery has been installed and with the increase of crushing facilities, the production should expand and the yield of fine gold increase. I am sure that members will join with me in the hope that this expansion will continue.

**HON. N. KEENAN** (Nedlands) [8.58]: Unfortunately I was not able to hear distinctly all that the Minister had to say. Apart from the difficulties arising from the acoustic properties of the Chamber, he spoke in a rather low tone. I should have liked to hear something more about the industry generally and particularly the results of some of the companies that have been successful. It is a fact that although the gold output has been maintained and even increased during the past year, there has been a very definite and marked decline in public interest in the mining industry. In fact, one might say with a great deal of truth, that interest in the mining industry on the part of the investing public has ceased.

The Minister for Justice: Not as bad as that.

**HON. N. KEENAN**: Companies that were well equipped or had funds with which to provide their equipment have been able to carry on, and, I am glad to say, with success, but if money were now sought from the public for a new find, it would have to be exceptionally good to elicit any support. One company was able to secure funds at a time when mining was popular, and therefore it was able to carry out its developmental work. But the general interest in mining has declined to an enormous extent. The cause is not far to find.

Mr. Cross: The public has not got over the wild cats that followed the Yellowdine boom.

**HON. N. KEENAN**: The cause is not far to seek. It is that the public was disgusted by the abnormal number of wild cats put on the market. As I have said here before, the public was unfortunately misled as to the real merits of some of these shows by certain figures which were given to them, and should not have been given to them, in particular by two members of the present Government, who extended a very ill-advised patronage to propositions which had no merits at all. The Premier will allow me to acquit him of any desire in the world to mislead the public, but the patronage was ill-judged. The result, naturally, has been that now it almost stinks in the nostrils to take a proposition to the Eastern States, where money is looked for to develop the mining industry of western Australia. We should not do anything to mislead, even inadvertently, other people. I remember the time when the Bullfinch was put on the market in London. I happened to be there then. The Western Australian Government of the day brought in a Bill to construct a railway to Bullfinch from Southern Cross. Soon afterwards the mine proved utterly worthless.

Mr. Lambert: It is producing gold.

**HON. N. KEENAN**: It may be. Everything produces something; even the hon. member. I was in London at the time, and a clergyman who had lost every penny he possessed in the Bullfinch mine came to see me. His ground of complaint was that in the course of recommending the Bullfinch Railway Bill to the House the Government of the day stated that it had taken some steps to ascertain the value of the mine and was quite satisfied on that point. That was sufficient for this man—a man of very limited means—to put all he had into the mine and lose most of it. That is only an example. But what should have been done by the Government as soon as the Bullfinch boom started, and what was left undone, was to compel those who put mining propositions before the public to disclose all stages from the first inception of the option to the point of flotation, and show what the option was obtained for. These options are obtained for a mere bagatelle, for a shilling. The option goes

into the hands of some speculator, who may pass it on with a considerable amount added, and finally it reaches the public at a colossal sum, considering its merits. That explains the disgust which now exists on the part of the public to indulge in any mining speculation. There is no difficulty in making the provision I have asked for. All that has to be done is to amend the Mining Act so as to give power to the Minister to refuse to register transfers unless certain information is disclosed, and also to make public the information in the case of all transfers of leases to companies of the kind I have indicated—to give comprehensive information setting out the complete history of the transaction. Then the public will know whether what they are asked to put their money up to support is a proposition of a particular kind which unfortunately was only too common during the last three or four years.

The Minister for Mines: But wild cats have been floated in this country for 40 years.

Hon. N. KEENAN: And every time that fact has killed the boom. If the Minister for Mines remembers, the boom at the end of the last century was killed by wild cats. Then there came another boom, a small one, the Hampton Plains boom; and that was killed by wild cats. Next we got the boom of 1932, one of the largest we had, and that also was killed by wild cats. No effort has been made to stop that operation. I asked the late Mr. Munsie on more than one occasion to amend the Mining Act, or else—if it was, as I thought it was, quite possible under existing powers—to make a regulation governing the matter, a regulation requiring that certain information should be supplied before transfers could be registered. Unfortunately Mr. Munsie did not do so. And here we are to-day in the position that it is only a Blue Bird or some other exceptional mine of that kind that attracts any public support whatever. Nowadays one can have an absolutely genuine proposition and seek for support and get none. So I am not at all satisfied with our mining laws, or what they should do as calculated to protect the industry. I hope that before this Parliament reaches its end, that matter will be considered. Even now it is not too late to provide that these precautions shall be taken into account. Then the public, knowing that

it is protected, will respond in a far more generous manner than is now the case to any appeal for support of the industry. That is all I desire to say generally on the mining industry. As I have said, I may be to blame but I do not think I heard any remarks by the Minister on the general condition of the industry. He talked a good deal about specific mines, but said nothing about the state of the industry generally.

The Premier: Our gold production will be worth about £10,000,000 this year.

Hon. N. KEENAN: No doubt mines that got capital before the crash came are using that capital for developmental purposes in some cases, and in other instances production has been entered upon. Mines that have existed almost from the days when I was first on the goldfields are still carrying on, owing to modern methods, with a greater measure of success than they achieved in the earlier years.

There is another matter on which I would like to say a few words, and that is the long-debated question of the right of the Minister to grant reservations. I have never had any doubt whatever that the section of the Act which is relied upon by this Government and has been relied upon by past Governments as authorising the Minister for Mines to grant reservations is and has been wrongly construed. I have no doubt whatever that the proper construction of that provision gives the Minister power to make reservations only for police stations, or schools, or recreation grounds, or some other social service, and that it never was intended to grant reservations for mining purposes. But it is undoubtedly—I am glad to add—an advantage that the power should exist under limited conditions. I have no doubt whatever that if it is exercised properly and under limited conditions, it will be a great help in attracting capital. I should like to see the section amended so as to give to the Minister power, which in my opinion he has not to-day, to grant reservations of a limited character under certain conditions which would make it impossible for the privilege to be abused. I hope that aspect too will receive attention. We have no great mass of matter on the notice paper. The Government to-night has taken every single day except the second Wednesday for Government business, and there should be ample time during this session to deal with the subject.

Mr. Lambert: You know very well that mining reservations were not started by the present Government, but by your Government.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If the hon. member will not listen, let him go to sleep again. Of course I said it was not this Government that first granted mining reservations, or the last Government either. I believe the first reservation was granted by Mr. Scaddan. But that does not matter. The point is that the granting of reservations in the first instance was, as I say, in my opinion clearly illegal. Since then, owing to the efforts of some members of this Chamber, reservations on the whole have been practically wiped out.

Mr. Marshall: No; that is not so. Up to 12 months the Government can grant as many reservations as it likes.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I was pointing out that if the Act was amended to give the power to the Minister, it should be amended to give the power only for limited periods and under certain conditions. Those conditions should be fairly generous, though we must rely on the Minister to safeguard the State. Under those conditions, I have myself come to the conclusion, the power would be to the great advantage of the industry. It would induce those who have capital available to develop areas which are completely beyond the power of any one person to attempt to develop. One does not know what one can get. One might have to spend a great deal of money to see whether there was anything worth getting. Therefore one would want protection over an area much larger than the average mining lease, because one has no knowledge of where ore bodies are to be found. I have nothing further to add.

**MR. STYANTS** (Kalgoorlie) [9.13]: This Vote and that of the Railway Department are probably the two most important Votes with which my district is concerned, and I propose to offer a few remarks on them. I agree with a great deal of what the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) has said. It is a pity that something has not been inserted in our mining laws to prevent the ramps that have taken place from time to time, right from the inception of gold-mining in this State and, I suppose, gold-mining in any State. Ramps and wildcats and white elephants and saltbush shows have

recurred throughout the goldfields areas of Australia. The difficulty in getting a check-up on these shows is that one never knows, from one foot to another, what the ground will reveal. I myself have seen shows that on surface indications, and on indications down to about 50 or 60 feet, one would have no hesitation in recommending to investors anywhere; and yet after another five feet of sinking they cut out completely and did not show a colour. On the other hand, it is on record that one of the greatest dividend producers in this country, the Great Boulder mine, cut completely out for 200 or 300 feet. So it is extremely difficult to get either the State Mining Engineer or any other mining engineer to give a thoroughly reliable and correct estimate of what a show is likely to develop into or is not likely to develop into; and so there is difficulty, if not actual danger, in allowing any Government official to give an estimate of what a show is likely to be. It is interesting to note the dividends that have been paid by the goldmining companies of this State during the past 12 months. We find the amount is £1,213,529, an increase over the amount paid for 1936 of £134,691. The dividends to the end of 1937, from the time when records were first kept, amount to £34,131,159. The total production including premiums and gold bonus amounted to £220,549,190. The increase in production over the previous year was 154,857 ounces, the highest yield since 1916.

A most pleasing feature, and one that indicates the permanency of the goldmining industry, is that the companies, by improved methods of treatment, and because of the increased value of gold, are able profitably to treat ore of a much lower grade than was possible in past years. The value of ore treated dropped from 28.85s. to 28.15s. per ton. The reduction was slight, but was more than offset by the increased gold premium of 105.616 per cent. It is indeed encouraging to note that the Big Bell mine is working and showing a profit on ore worth only 17.81s. per ton. That augurs well for the opening up of other known large bodies of low-grade ore and is distinctly favourable, in my opinion, to the extension of the industry and its permanency.

The average number of men engaged in the mining industry in 1937 was 17,136, a slight increase over the number of the previous year. The goldmining section was almost entirely responsible for the employment of the additional men.

Mr. Patrick: Is the Big Bell ore worth only 17s. a ton?

Mr. STYANTS: According to the mining reports, 17.81s.

Mr. Patrick: Three dwts. would be over 27s.

Mr. STYANTS: That is probably at the standard price of gold.

Hon. N. Keenan: That would be extraction value.

Mr. STYANTS: Another interesting feature of the gold mining industry is the average tonnage of ore raised per man and the value of gold produced per man. The value of gold produced at normal price is £4 4s. 11½d. per ounce. The estimated production per man at this price was £264, an increase per man over the production of 1936 of £33. If we take into consideration the premium at the rate of 105 per cent., we find each man is raising gold to the value of £528, an increase of £66 over that of the previous year. The average quantity of ore raised per man was 188 tons, an increase of 29 tons over the tonnage for the previous year. Despite the fact that our mines are getting deeper, the men are producing a bigger tonnage per man than they produced previously. Whilst the average for the State is 188 tons per man, we find that in the East Coolgardie district the average is 270 tons per man and the Chaffers mine is now down 3,758ft. Improvements in the facilities for handling ore are therefore not diminishing the output, but rather increasing it, and it must not be forgotten that the men are willing and ready to give of their very best to assist. The Lake View and Star mine employs 1,260 men. The figures I am about to quote indicate the flourishing condition of the industry and are a refutation of the statements by pessimists that the industry is on the down-grade. As a matter of fact, it is consistently on the up-grade. The Great Boulder mine employs 876 men, and that mine is increasing its plant. The Chaffers shaft, as I have said, is down 3,758ft., and satisfactory diamond drilling has been carried out to a much greater depth. It is also encouraging to note that as the mines get deeper, the ore is not lessening in value, but in many cases increasing. Gold Mines of Kalgoorlie has erected its plant to treat 8,000 tons per month and the plant is in full operation. Until the last two or three years, most of the smaller mines

in Kalgoorlie, such as the Paringa and the Gold Mines of Kalgoorlie, depended upon other crushing plants to treat their ore; but being so satisfied with prospects and so assured of success, they have erected expensive and efficient plants of their own. The Paringa reports larger returns and its plant is in operation. The South Kalgarli mine has increased its output from 16,000 fine ounces to 21,000 fine ounces. There has been 13,000 feet of exploratory boring on the old Hannans Reward leases; and, as is customary in most gold mining ventures, all kinds of rumours are afloat as to what has actually been found. We have heard rumours from a colour up to four or five ounces, but in view of the fact that considerable litigation has ensued over those areas, and that the persons claiming ownership are prepared to expend large sums of money to decide the point, one can assume the property is valuable and in the course of a short time will be employing a large number of men.

Another pleasing feature of the industry is the gradual improvement that has taken place in the health of the workers employed in the mines. I refer particularly to occupational diseases. At the first examination under the Commonwealth laboratory scheme in 1925, the number of normals was found to be 80.5 per cent., while in 1937, the last year for which figures are available, the percentage increased to 95.4. In 1925, workers suffering from silicosis (early) were 11.4 per cent., and this was reduced in 1937 to 4.3 per cent.; those suffering from silicosis (advanced) was reduced from 4.5 per cent. to .2 per cent.; the number suffering from silicosis, plus T.B., was reduced from 3.3 per cent. to .1 per cent.; and whereas those suffering from T.B. numbered only .3, there is now none. This gradual and continued improvement in the health of the men is principally attributable to the laboratory examinations.

Unfortunately, the number of fatal accidents is not decreasing. We have from 38 to 40 per annum. That is a terrible toll of life. Many mining companies, the Chamber of Mines, the Australian Workers' Union and the mining inspectors have formed general safety committees and are hopeful that during the ensuing 12 months the number of fatalities will be fewer. The introduction of the cartridge firing system has resulted in minimising the number of fatalities occurring from explosions, but

what we have saved in that way appears to have been lost in other directions. Mining inspectors are of the opinion that many accidents can be prevented if proper precautions are taken; and, with that end in view, in addition to the committees I have mentioned, the Boulder Perseverance Mine has formed its safety committee, consisting of one underground foreman, one surface employee, one machine man, one trucker, one employee on general work underground, and a first-aid man. The company is to be commended for having done this; it shows the right spirit. I believe that if the workers are educated and act on the advice or the opinion of the Chief Mining Inspector of the State, many accidents will be prevented. This is an avenue which can be explored with considerable benefit to the workers. The results since 1936 show a considerable reduction in the number of accidents per 1,000 shifts worked. We find there has been a reduction from 4.1 to 3.34, and that in 1937 the number dropped to 3.15. The number of days lost per 1,000 shifts in 1936 was 28.7, and in 1937, 20.37. Other mines have appointed safety men, whose particular job is to make sure that safe-working conditions are observed.

The last matter I propose to deal with is one of controversial interest. I refer to the shorter working week, or lessened hours of labour, particularly in laborious industries, such as the mining industry. I have a statement which includes figures culled from the monthly figures issued by the Boulder Perseverance, Ltd., and the Lake View and Star, Ltd. These figures show the tonnages and the profit from month to month for the six months immediately prior to the 40-hour week being brought into operation in the gold mining industry by an award of the Arbitration Court, and also the figures for the succeeding six months. It was predicted by those putting up the case for the employers—as it has always been predicted by them—that shorter hours of labour in an industry would have disastrous effects. I want to show exactly what the position is. In November, prior to the introduction of the 40-hour week, the tonnage handled at the Boulder Perseverance, Ltd., was 9,211. The yield was £31,850, and the profit £15,716. In December, 8,884 tons were produced and in January, 9,215. In February, 8,810 tons were produced, in March 9,220, and in April 9,201. From May to October the 40-

hour week was in operation and the tonnage produced for the respective months was, May 9,298, June 9,220, July 9,216, August 9,243, September 9,019, and October 9,207. The profit for that particular period ranged from £15,000 in November prior to the 40-hour week, to an average of about £16,000 for the six months. For the six months November to April inclusive, the 44-hour week was in operation and simple addition shows the result for that six months to have been as follows:—Tonnage 54,541, yield £182,032, profit £84,205. For the six months May to October inclusive, during which the 40-hour week operated, the result was, tonnage 55,203, yield £185,316, and profit £89,856. So that with a 44-hour week in operation 54,541 tons were produced and with a 40-hour week 55,203 tons were produced. There was an increased value of £3,000 and an increased profit of £5,000 during the 40-hour period. These figures indicate that the output of ore increased by 61 tons during six months in which the 40-hour week was in operation compared with the six months when the 44-hour week was worked. The value of the yield increased by £3,284 and the profit by £5,651. It will be seen, therefore, that there has been a small increase in tonnage, and a substantial increase in profit during the 40-hour week period. Evidently the ore treated during the last six months was of a slightly higher grade than the ore treated during the preceding six months, but the increase in profits was not much short of double the increase in the value of the yield. From this it is apparent that the introduction of the 40-hour week has not on this mine decreased output or increased costs.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Was the same number of men employed?

Mr. STYANTS: Yes, practically the same number of men. There is no indication that the staff has increased. I should say that, had there been a greater number of men employed, the profit would have been reduced, whereas for the six-monthly period, when the 40-hour week was in operation, £5,000 more profit was obtained than for the 44-hour period. Further evidence that the effect of the 40-hour week is not wholly disastrous is supplied by the figures of the Lake View and Star. There is no need for me to worry the Committee with all of the figures, but I will mention that the position I have outlined has practically been repeated

at the Lake View and Star Mine. All production increased during the 40-hour period from 297,946 tons to 308,511 tons, a total increase of 10,565 tons. The yield increased from £657,262 to £689,608, an increase of £32,346, while the profit increased from £276,947 to £286,506, an increase of £9,559. The increase in profit in this case compared with the increase in yield is not so great as in the case of Boulder Perseverance, Ltd., but even so the company seems to be getting on very nicely under the "burden" of the 40-hour week. Figures such as these are more than an indication that a reduction in working hours does not necessarily mean ruination to a mining company. The experience of these companies shows that the fears expressed before the Arbitration Court by representatives of the employers when application was being made for a shorter working week in the industry were quite groundless. Nevertheless, the shorter week will continue to be made an excuse for the failure of certain mining propositions to live up to expectations. In the light of the figures of the Boulder Perseverance, Ltd., and Lake View and Star, Ltd., such statements must be revealed as proof of the incompetence of those making them. In laborious occupations where physical exertion is great, it would be found, I think, that the reduction of a 44-hour week to a 40-hour week would result in nine cases out of 10 in no reduction of production.

I am particularly pleased that the industry is in such a flourishing condition. The amount of gold produced and the revenue derived from the industry, particularly during depressions has had a wonderful effect in tiding the State, on more than one occasion, over a very critical period. All things considered the Government has always lent a sympathetic ear to the requests of mining companies. During the last 12 months mining operations increased to such an extent at the Golden Mile that the main from the Mt. Charlotte Reservoir was not sufficient to supply the water required at the mines. The Government accordingly took up the main and laid down a considerably larger one and the companies are now supplied with ample water. The Government is to be commended for giving the industry all the assistance it possibly could.

**MR. MARSHALL** (Murchison) [9.39]: It would not be correct for me to permit the Mining Estimates to pass without having something to say.

Mr. Styants: It would not be discreet, anyway.

Mr. MARSHALL: To listen to the Minister's eulogy of the industry, and to hear of the number of men employed, and the prosperity the industry is enjoying was pleasing. We could probably have improved the position materially had we been more alert and possessed of more initiative a few years ago. There is a good deal in what the member for Nedlands said in regard to the ramps put over foreign investors. The State took no action to prevent people with money from being practically robbed of any possible chance of receiving a return on their investments. As the member for Kalgoorlie said, it was difficult for the Government to take action, but the fact remains that no mines whatever existed to back up some of the propositions that were launched.

Mr. Patrick: Statements were made that there were thousands of tons in reserve.

Mr. MARSHALL: That was the story told in the prospectuses by individuals who had no intention other than to decoy investors into a venture in order to obtain a rake-off which they would pocket for themselves. In that respect the Act could be amended. I understand there are one or two clauses in the New South Wales Mining Act dealing with such propositions—provisions that make it positively unsafe for anyone to attempt to defraud investors. I have frequently asked various Ministers whether they could find it convenient to examine the Mining Act. Many of them have had no conception of the useless sections contained in the Act, and of other urgently needed clauses that might be drafted for insertion in the Act. For years I have asked Ministers to consider a complete overhaul of this legislation, with a view to bringing it up to date. A great defect is that different forms of leases are intermingled, and one would need to be a Philadelphian lawyer to find in the Act the particular information he seeks. There is no classification of the many different forms of leases. Coal mines, oil mines, gold mines, and other mines are all mixed up together. It is high time the Act was brought up to date. There are sections that outlived their usefulness years ago. Some could not be interpreted. One



cannot understand why they were put there; yet they remain. Much could be put into the Act that would be of material advantage to the State as a whole, and the industry in particular. In spite of all my appeals, nothing has been done. We cannot expect anything to be done at this late stage, but perhaps something will be achieved when the new Parliament meets. The task is a big one, but it should be undertaken. I hope if the present Minister undertakes to accomplish it, he will not pin his faith to departmental officers, but will obtain opinions from outside. I have every justification for being somewhat doubtful about the ability of departmental officers to frame legislation.

It is satisfactory to know that the industry employs a large number of men. The industry was the salvation of the State when the depression occurred, because it absorbed quite a number of people for whom the taxpayers of the State would otherwise have had to provide. There is a pathetic side also, and it is that the industry calls for the sacrifice of many lives and inflicts injuries on a large number of employees. Anyone who cares to look at the report of the department will be able to see the exact number of men annually sacrificed in the production of gold. Year in and year out I have asked Ministers to give consideration to another aspect of mining practice, and have had promises only. I argue that there is need for the Act to contain a provision making it obligatory on a company when setting out its plans for the development of a mine to provide for ventilation. One of the most injurious and cruel aspects of gold mining is the case with which miners are affected by silica, due to bad ventilation. Yet we allow companies to come along and proceed with development work, and there is never any attempt made—and it cannot be made until the Act is amended—to compel the provision of proper ventilation. In consequence, men swallow dust for a period of a few years. Now, I am thankful to say, they are compensated when incapacitated, but their lives are materially shortened because of the bad air that they inhale, air laden with silica. Many men's lives have been sacrificed, and young men are being made old men. They go on living in misery until Providence takes them off this planet. If we are to have goldmining, side by side with giving the companies every assistance and

encouragement, we should also ask them to be humane and to provide proper ventilation so that when the men get into the bowels of the earth they can at least have the danger to which they become exposed, minimised. Now we allow the companies to develop their mines, and when they get down to perhaps a thousand feet or more the inspector will draw their attention to the fact that they have not provided proper ventilation. A company will put in a winze, or a shaft, but that is very costly. It has become a big proposition by the time the difficulties have arisen. Instead of compelling a company to earmark a certain portion of its profits to provide for ventilation, it is allowed to go on until the task is too expensive. It is not much use raising these points in the dying hours of the Parliament, because I do not suppose the Minister will be able to give much attention to them; but I repeat it is time something was done. I do not mind companies getting a fair return on their investments, but I take exception to the positive neglect that results in the shortening of men's lives and bringing about suffering and misery that are unnecessary. I trust that the Minister will in the new Parliament again occupy his present position, and that he will take action along the lines I have suggested. It is true, as the member for Kalgoorlie pointed out, that fatal accidents in the mining industry have not shown an increase, and that there has been a slight reduction in the number of serious accidents. It is pleasing to note that, but at the same time I ask the Minister to realise that even that improvement is not sufficient. We are not giving sufficiently close attention to the protection of the lives of the miners. I have said before, and I repeat, that the amount of suffering involved in the production of gold is not worth while, but I have not had much support. I draw the Minister's attention also to another phase of mining affecting the men working on treatment plants. At Wiluna, a plant is isolated because of the nature of the ore that it treats. There has been a great deal of experimental work carried on there, and now all sorts of fumes and gases are carried to where the men are working, and I am sorry to say the health of the men has consequently been affected. That, however, is not the worst feature. Bad and all as it may be to learn of men being rendered

physically incapable of working while still comparatively young, we find the companies, I suppose in order to endeavour to bring down the premiums now paid for compensation, taking every opportunity to dismiss men, when medical certificates show that the men are failing rapidly in health. That seems to me most unfair, but one cannot blame the companies, I suppose, for taking advantage of the knowledge they acquire as the result of the medical examination. When a man's health is impaired, there should be more humane treatment meted out to him. What I want the Minister to do is to see that there is a strict inspection of the work that is going on, with a view to minimising the possibility of the men becoming victims.

The Minister for Mines: I think we are doing that.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Minister thinks so! I will be able to tell him next session whether it is being done, because I am going to have a look over the plants. I am not castigating the Minister for being entirely careless, or neglectful, but usually when examinations are made and reports submitted, little is done to alleviate the position, and then the question seems to die down.

The Minister for Mines: Give me a month to put it into operation.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is what I like to hear. But I want more than a promise.

The Minister for Mines: It will be a fact.

Mr. MARSHALL: Having got so far with regard to the health of the men, and having heard such an emphatic statement, I am hopeful that something will now be done to protect the health and the lives of the individuals employed in this important industry. There is another direction in which I have already suggested the Mining Act should be amended, and that is in regard to land being held under one tenure or another and not being worked. For years I have endeavoured to get Ministers for Mines to take action. The position is that anyone can apply for forfeiture of a lease that has not been worked in conformity with the covenants under which it was granted. For the life of me I cannot see why the Minister has not accepted the proposal I have submitted, a proposal that is reasonable and could be worked without interference or injustice being done, and that is that an inspector of mines should be empowered to call upon the lessee to show

justification why his area should not be forfeited. Under the Mining Act, if a person ceases to work daily on his lease or prospecting area, and if he ceases to work for three days or longer, that renders the lease liable to forfeiture. I do not know of anyone that would be prepared to apply for forfeiture, nor do I suggest that a lease should be forfeited, because I think that would be rather sudden action to take. Some of the blocks, however, are held for years on end, and the rent has not been paid. As no work has been done on the blocks, the law has been broken. A person hesitates to apply for forfeiture because if he does so the holder of the ground gets busy and circulates rumours about the district. In consequence, anyone who applies for forfeiture is not too popular. If a person could say to an inspector that a block had not been worked, the inspector himself could, by personal observation, determine whether it had been worked. The indications are always there. Some leases have not been worked for a considerable time, and the fact is quite obvious. The inspector could take the lessee to court and compel him to justify his right to occupy the block. That should have been done long ago. The holders of the areas are familiar with the conditions under which the land is held, and if those conditions are not complied with, then the land should be forfeited. This brings up the question of reservations. The Minister has power to grant any area he likes up to a period of 12 months. It is true that the amending Act passed last session limits each reservation to 300 acres, but that only applies in the same way as 24 acres might comprise a lease. A person can apply for several reservations. I do not know whether the member for Nedlands was in his seat when I moved to disallow a regulation. There were two reservations originally, each of 300 acres. So it will be seen that it is easy to get over the difficulty. All one has to do is to apply for three reservations. I admit that any renewal for a period longer than 12 months is difficult. We have heard it said that reservations are of no value. One can look anywhere he likes in the auriferous belt of Western Australia and find it studded with reservations. Never on any occasion did I find the holder of a reservation doing anything at all with a well-defined ore chan-

nel that may have been there. I remind the Minister that he has made a bad start, and I draw his attention to the matter that where a reservation or a lease has been granted under certain conditions, and an application is made for forfeiture, or in the case of a reservation, cancellation, that where he has proof positive that the covenant under which the grant was made has not been complied with for years, it is his duty immediately to forfeit, or cancel. He did not do that in the case of the Day Dawn reservation. The Prospectors and Leaseholders' Association wrote to me, as the point was a sore one with the members of that organisation. I sent the letter to the Minister who replied that the reservation would expire in the course of the ensuing six weeks or two months.

The Minister for Mines: Three weeks, I think.

Mr. MARSHALL: That was the last time I wrote. On the first occasion the Minister said that if a renewal was applied for he would consider cancellation. I replied to the Minister that the association at Day Dawn had not asked him to consider a renewal of the reservation, but its immediate cancellation. I have here the reply I received from the Minister, dated the 9th August, 1938—

Dear Sir,—I have to acknowledge receipt of your communication of the 30th ult. in regard to temporary Reserve 1033II at Day Dawn. Such reserve expires at the end of this month, and I can see nothing to warrant immediate cancellation.

That reservation has been held for years.

The Minister for Mines: Do you say I granted the reservation?

Mr. MARSHALL: No, but the Minister said there was nothing to warrant its cancellation.

The Minister for Mines: The lease had only three weeks to run.

Mr. MARSHALL: All the more reason why the reservation should have been cancelled. It had been held for four years. The people who held it bought a steam shovel, and subsequently sold it to the Big Bell mine. I think the late Mr. Munsie said that those concerned had expended £8,000 on the area. I am not prepared to accept any figures supplied to the Minister by the parties concerned. The shovel was an asset belonging to the company, so that the money was not expended on the reservation. A little costeening had been done and the sale

of the shovel to the Big Bell mine enabled the company to recoup itself for that outlay.

The Minister for Mines: You are sure it was sold to the Big Bell mine?

Mr. MARSHALL: That is where it went. Whether or not the implement was sold, the expenditure upon it had nothing to do with the reservation. It was capital expenditure on machinery. All the work done on the reservation represented a few hundred feet of costeening. I know that from my own observation. Beyond that not a pick had been put into the ground. The company held an option over two leases inside the reservation, and was trying to float them and get a rake-off for itself. Why I say the Minister has made a bad start is that, although the information was supplied to him, he put it to me that he could see nothing to warrant cancellation.

The Minister for Mines: They had only three weeks in which to finish their occupation.

Mr. MARSHALL: All the more reason for cancellation. Had it been a question of a big expenditure on rental, something might have been said for the people concerned. If the Minister is going to take up this attitude, and this is going to be his programme in the future, members will realise how we shall get on together.

The Minister for Mines: Is the reservation being worked now?

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not know whether there are any reservations in my electorate. The Minister could have granted half-a-dozen in the last 12 months without my knowing anything about them. I will finish reading the Minister's letter to me. He says—

If an extension is not applied for this month, the reserve will lapse, while if an application is received, I will give the whole matter very full consideration before reaching a decision.

There is no necessity to waste time over a proposition of this kind. The reservation should have been cancelled long ago. I am surprised the Minister did not do so long ago. The company could not sell the area, although it endeavoured to put it on the market on many occasions. I am pleased to say that several prospectors are now working it. The Minister ought to depart from the procedure that has been adopted with regard to reservations. I do not know whether he proposes to grant any more. Under Section

297 of the Act the warden can make a recommendation to the Minister. I suggest that if any application is made to the Minister personally for a reservation, he should allow it to go to the warden who will hear the case, and then make a recommendation. That will give people in the district a chance to present their case, instead of the Minister granting a reservation unknown to them. That is the proper procedure to adopt.

It is time all our mines were classified. To-day grave injustice is being done to a number of prospectors who from time to time are obliged to employ labour. Let me instance Peak Hill, a district that is well known to the Minister. The cement on the surface of the surrounding area is being treated at the State battery. Several prospectors own all that block of country, and have had occasion to employ one or two men at crushing periods. All they have to do is to put down a few holes and blast the ground with powder. Under the Mine Workers' Relief Act those prospectors have to pay just as much as would a company working 2,000 feet to 3,000 feet underground and causing their men gradually to become poisoned. The men employed by the prospectors are working only on the surface, and yet their employers have to pay as much as the big companies have to pay. Our mining industry should be surveyed throughout, and the mines classified as they are classified in South Africa. The payment would then be in proportion to the damage done. As things are, the prospector who is doing injury to the health of no one, has to pay in the same way as do the big mines that are slowly poisoning the men employed underground.

I wish to refer also to the prohibition against men continuing to work in the industry. I have never supported the Mine Workers' Relief Act, and regret it was ever supported by members representing the goldfields. It contains principles to which none of us should ever have subscribed. The measure was, however, supported in this House and finally went through. The late Mr. Scaddan told us that if goldfields' members were displeased with it, it could go overboard. Only the then member for Kalgoorlie (now Senator Cunningham) and I opposed the Bill. I do not know how many men are affected, but I do know of one in particular. I have known this man for 30 years. As a boy he worked in the industry,

and continued to do so until he was 72. He was then prohibited. When he applied for compensation he found he was not insured, so that he now has to live on the old age pension. All his life has been given to the industry, but, because of the legislative changes, this man cannot get one penny by way of compensation. In such a case the Minister might well bring down a Bill to provide for compensation for this man and others similarly situated, so that they may have something to live on in their old age. Under the Act that was originally sponsored by a Labour Government this man would have received compensation, but under the Mine Workers' Relief Act it is denied him. He was not insured, and the man who employed him was not worth anything. This is not a case of compensation but one of insurance. When it comes to compensation for such injuries as a broken arm or a crushed finger the recipient contributes nothing towards the money he gets, but when it is a question of a chest complaint, the recipients have to pay 9d. a week. That is not compensation but insurance. I am sorry the Mine Workers' Relief Act ever came into existence. Those goldfields members who supported it did the miners an injustice. It is no use lamenting now, but members can see what may happen. No doubt the Act was a good thing in some directions. It relieved the State's revenue of a good deal of expenditure and brought a number of men under the Workers' Compensation Act. No doubt the legislation benefited the Government, but was a detriment to the type of men to whom I have referred. I ask the Minister to keep in mind what I have said. I hope he will be in office during the ensuing session, in which case I am sure he will do something in this direction. If he does not, he will hear from me from year to year, if I also am here.

The Minister for Mines: As I hope you will be.

Mr. MARSHALL: One never knows. Political life is uncertain and as the Irishman said, "We are here today and gone yesterday." I hope the Minister will take cognisance of what I have said regarding the Mining Act, which is obsolete in the main and many of its provisions are conflicting. There is a lot in it that ought to be out of it, and a lot out of it that ought to be in it. I hope the Minister will keep in mind matters relating to the health and welfare

of miners and give consideration to amending the Mining Act so as to make it more workable.

**MR. WELSH** (Pilbara) [10.16]: The Government is to be congratulated on its outlook on the mining industry and for the assistance rendered to those associated with it. Particularly do I refer to the prospecting scheme inaugurated by the late Mr. Munsie. Under its provisions excellent results have been secured and employment has been provided for many men. As a result of the scheme, finds have been made in the southern portions of the fields. I am sorry to add that that does not apply to the north. Nevertheless mining in the Pilbara district has taken on a new lease of life and many new shows are being worked. The Comet is a particularly good mine and a number of old shows are working on increasing ore bodies. The Government has seen fit to improve the conditions at the Marble Bar battery by installing an extra five head of stamps. In consequence, prospectors are able to get their ore crushed in a reasonable time. Formerly it was useless to take any quantity of ore to the battery because the plant could not cope with it. One of the greatest difficulties in that part of the State, particularly in the Nullagine district, is the shortage of water. Prospectors have been prevented from working over an extended area and the Government could assist by putting down bores from which adequate supplies could be drawn. The work would not entail heavy expenditure. On a number of stations and other properties, bores have been put down from which good supplies of water are procured. Many men are working about the known fields because they cannot go outback owing to the water difficulty, which will have to be solved in some way. In the Comet we have one of the best gold-producing shows in the State. That is the only mine of any extent in the district, but I am convinced that, if Government assistance is rendered in the direction I have indicated, we will have more mines like the Comet. The country there has merely been scratched and a different class of ore and of lode has been worked.

Hon. C. G. Latham: But the water difficulty is the main trouble.

**MR. WELSH:** Yes, I hope the Government will be able to do something regard-

ing that matter. I again congratulate Ministers upon their outlook regarding the gold mining industry. We have not much to complain of in the North. We have received assistance from the Government and the provision of the extra five head of stamps at the Marble Bar battery will be of importance to the welfare of that district.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Medical. £38,260.*

**THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH** (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [10.20]: Unlike the Mines Department, the Medical Department does not deal with one of our prosperous industries. The department is doing all it possibly can to cope with the situation and I shall indicate to the Committee what has been done during the past year. Naturally, the Medical Department has to exercise general supervision over the public hospitals. The whole cost of maintenance of hospitals and any funds required for building additions and equipment is dependent on the national hospital fund. Members may be interested to know that for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1938, the hospital tax produced £245,659 while hospital fees collected amounted to £50,616, making a total of £296,275. There was a credit balance from the previous year of £56,612, which, with a grant from the Treasury of £20,740, provided a grand total of £373,627. During the year, subsidies paid to departmental hospitals amounted to £140,621 and to non-departmental hospitals £160,245, or a total of £300,866, of which £126,378, inclusive of £19,196 for building and equipment, was granted to metropolitan hospitals and £174,488, inclusive of £14,963 for building and equipment, was allocated to country hospitals. On the 30th June last there was a credit balance in the fund of £17,465, against which there are numerous commitments for work in hand or to be carried out.

Regarding the Estimates for the present financial year, we anticipate that the receipts from the hospital tax will total £250,000, fees collected to £56,000 and these amounts, with the balance of £17,465 brought forward from the previous financial year, will give an estimated revenue of £323,465. On the other side of the ledger, the estimated expenditure for the year from the hospital fund includes administration costs

amounting to £1,600. Members will agree that that small amount for administrative costs in dealing with an estimated revenue of £323,465 indicates fairly economical working, and that the drain on the funds from that standpoint is very slight. More particularly is that so when it is remembered that the expenditure covers inspections of the balance sheets and accounts of the various hospitals. Then there is provided £3,200 for the collecting expenses and last year the expenditure of a similar amount resulted in the collection of £50,616, in addition to the examination of the books of the various hospitals and assistance to hospital committees in collecting outstanding fees. The Estimates also cover an expenditure of £137,331 for the maintenance of committee hospitals. We have 91 hospitals in the country operated by the tax, and almost without exception they find great difficulty in paying their way from year to year. The reason is obvious. In almost every district there are indigent people, and although hospitals can and do admit patients other than those that are indigent, there is a number of indigent cases—many of them aborigines—from whom no revenue is received, and the deficiency must be made up from the funds. In addition, some of the hospitals, such as those in the district of the member for Mt. Marshall, which has suffered seriously from drought, cannot expect fees to be paid by those treated. The maintenance of non-committee hospitals involved an expenditure of £147,971, and building and equipment £53,874, or a total of £343,976. That shows a debit of expenditure over receipts of £20,511. Unfortunately for the department, since that estimate was compiled other matters have cropped up that will have an adverse effect on the finances of the fund, such as the basic wage increase of 1s., involving a total of £750, and an amendment to the nurses' award providing for an increase in wages totalling £6,000. That award also gave a straight eight-hour shift for trainees, involving an expenditure of £2,221. Other initial items necessary to provide for an increased number of trainees will add another £21,000. There will be an estimated deficit of £40,000. The fire at Kalgoorlie Hospital in March last necessitated replacement of the wards at a cost of £30,000, to which the fund is contributing £11,000. Members already know that the Government has decided to carry

on with the additions to the Perth Hospital. The first portion will cost £425,000. That does not affect the hospital fund in regard to the capital cost. The Hospital Board proposes to raise the money, with the guarantee of the Government, but that will not interfere with the hospital fund.

In regard to medical services, we have five full-time medical officers in North-West centres, and their appointment has been fully justified. The local communities in the North-West are receiving far better medical services at no greater cost to the department. The new system is fully appreciated by the people of the North. I have a table which shows the extent of their appreciation. Previous to the inauguration of this system, doctors in the North-West were guaranteed a certain amount by the department. They retained the sums received in fees for the medical work they performed and the department provided the balance of the amount guaranteed. The men remained there for indefinite periods; some gave satisfaction, but others did not. A new scheme was inaugurated by my predecessor which provided for young well-qualified men to go to the North and to receive £1,000 a year. The amounts those men received for the medical work performed was paid into the fund, and it was agreed that no man should remain there more than three years. If at the end of 2½ years he desired to go to England or somewhere else for a post-graduate course, he received six months' leave of absence on half-pay. That has been an inducement for brilliant young men to go to the North to obtain practice, travel around the country and obtain a great variety of experience and, if they so desired, to go overseas for further study. Consequently we have a fine type of young doctor in the North. The people have demonstrated their appreciation by the amount that has been paid into the fund. The table I have here shows the debits, collections and percentage recovered from the inception of the scheme to the 30th June, 1938. The figures are as follows:—

Outstation.	Percentage		
	Debits.	Collections.	Recovered.
	£	£	
Broome ..	2,111	1,657	78.4
Derby ..	1,723	1,300	75.4
Port Hedland ..	3,845	2,843	73.9
Roebourne ..	1,137	919	80.8
Wyndham ..	3,808	2,759	72.4
Totals	<u>£12,624</u>	<u>£9,478</u>	<u>75</u>

The total percentage recovered is a long way ahead of that recovered in any other part of Western Australia. The next highest figure is that of Kalgoorlie, which is about 62 per cent.

The Department of Public Health of necessity experiences considerable difficulty in the supervision of public health over such a great area as is comprised in this State. Inspections are made by head office inspectors who visit the outlying districts as often as is reasonable. While inspecting they also advise and assist the local authorities on many matters. School medical and dental work are maintained at the maximum possible at the moment, and a travelling dental van fully equipped will be on the road to serve the outback children before the end of this year. The dental van was handed over by the Lotteries Commission yesterday, and will be a great acquisition. Three medical dental men travel through the country, but of necessity they can only visit places that are accessible by train or other forms of transport. Consequently the children in the smaller schools in various parts of the State—and in my travels during the last few months I have found schools dotted all over the place—have not received treatment. In addition, owing to the lack of sufficient dental surgeons, we have been treating in schools near the railway line children only up to seven or eight years of age. The van handed over yesterday will be in commission in the next two or three days. It is a fine up-to-date van, fully self-contained, and well equipped, and a very good man is in charge of it. He is a senior surgeon in the Perth Dental Hospital. That van is going to travel through the country. The Education Department has prepared a map showing where each school is situated, and the intention is to deal particularly with those schools that dental surgeons have been unable to touch. By this means they will be able to treat not only the children up to eight years of age but all the children in those districts. To get over the State will take a good while, but as the chairman of the Lotteries Commission remarked yesterday, if this van is a success, probably we shall be able to get a second one. I feel sure that the van will prove of very great value to the children of country districts who in the past have lacked dental treatment.

There are over 50 infant health centres and sub-centres in the State, of which about one-half are in the metropolitan area. These centres are subsidised from State funds and are doing excellent work under the supervision of an officer of the department. I have had an opportunity to visit a large number, and they are certainly a credit to the committees conducting them and to the officer in charge. If anyone admires babies—and I understand all politicians do—he may see a really good type by visiting the infant health centres. We maintain a small staff of visiting nurses who inspect all maternity homes and who maintain regular visits to the homes of notified cases of tuberculosis. Clinics are being maintained at the Perth Hospital and the Fremantle Hospital, and free attention and drugs are made available to other patients throughout the State where required. During the year immunisation against diphtheria has progressed satisfactorily and the number of children treated is now 33,904. The department is still assisting local authorities by providing half the cost of the material used.

From the middle of June of last year and during the early months of this year, the whole of Australia was menaced by a severe visitation of infantile paralysis. This State, I am pleased to say, was extremely fortunate to emerge with the lowest incidence of the disease in the Commonwealth and the loss of only two lives. While I was in the Eastern States during January, February and part of March, I spent about 50 per cent. of my time in visiting hospitals and other places where children were being treated for infantile paralysis, and the more I saw of them, the more thankful I was that Western Australia had escaped so lightly. In Victoria and New South Wales the number of cases ran into thousands, while in South Australia the outbreak was very bad. I stayed at Glenelg, in South Australia, for 14 days. At that time it should have been one of the busiest parts of South Australia, but owing to the outbreak of infantile paralysis and to children not being allowed to congregate, there was hardly a soul to be seen. At Williamstown, Victoria, it was pitiful to see the number of invalid chairs with children recovering from the disease. The children were paralysed and nobody could tell whether they would recover. I wish to

pay a tribute to the committee of medical men who took charge in Western Australia during the prevalence of the disease. Half-a-dozen of them formed an honorary committee with the Principal Medical Officer, and did everything possible to minimise and segregate the cases. We obtained two iron lungs, and had to use them on only two occasions. The committee did wonderful work in restricting the outbreak as it did. The public of Western Australia is under a deep debt of gratitude to those medical men who gave so much of their time, ability and experience to keep this dreadful disease within the narrowest limits.

Mr. Doney: Why not mention their names, and we shall know to whom we are grateful?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I am sorry that I have not their names before me. This month a pathological laboratory has been opened by the Commonwealth Health Department at Broome and is manned by a highly trained staff. This laboratory will fill a great need in the far North-West of the State. Early in the year the State was menaced by the arrival from overseas of a case of smallpox. There again we were fortunate. Prompt action was taken by the departmental officers and the outbreak was nipped in the bud. Through the prompt and efficient action of the Commonwealth officers, we were able to concentrate on that outbreak. Only one life was lost, and there was no further trouble. The outbreak might easily have spread, and anyone who knows anything about smallpox is aware of the danger once it gets away. Dr. Atkinson, Mr. Huelin and the Commonwealth medical men took the matter in hand straight away.

I have paid several visits to the Old Women's Home. I had not been there for many years, and I was pleased to find a considerable improvement. There are 70 inmates; everything was spick and span and the old women seemed to be very happy. We have a fine home for them, though it was not built for the purpose, and if it were enclosed with a decent iron railing instead of a wall, a most gorgeous garden could be made there. However, the medical men and the matron are of opinion that for some of the inmates it would not be safe to remove the wall. I do not agree; the place could be made very beautiful by removing the wall.

During the debate on the Address-in-reply the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) had a good deal to say about the Old Men's Home. While I have never been quite satisfied with it—I believe a lot more could be done and I hope a lot more will be done—the hon. member made a very drastic statement, but as I had not the right of reply, I could not answer him at the time. He compared the Old Men's Home with the Salvation Army Home, very much to the detriment of the Government institution. It was not a fair comparison. The Salvation Army Home is all that it purports to be; that is, it supplies board and lodging and does very good work. But the two homes are not comparable, because the Old Men's Home provides not only board and lodging, but clothing, hospital accommodation, medicines, surgical appliances, nursing, and in fact everything that men require for eating, drinking and wearing. The hospital patients comprise one-fifth of the inmates and cost 4s. per day. Then there are the large recreation ground, two billiard tables, a bagatelle table, wireless, and card tables, as well as two picture shows weekly. Those things all cost money.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Only the inmates of the hospital section cost 4s. per day. The others do not.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I mentioned that cost because the hon. member said that at the Salvation Army Home inmates paid 14s. per week and were better looked after. I am showing that there is hardly any comparison to be drawn between the two homes. The hon. member also said that we collected £18,000 per year from pensioners. The total collection is £13,351. The hon. member spoke as if the inmates were all receiving pensions and paying 14s. per week to the department. Only in respect of 353 men is the full pension paid, 6s. going to the men and 14s. to the department. Twenty inmates receive lesser amounts, and there are 49 pensioners in respect of whom nothing is received from the Commonwealth. In the case of a man who goes into the Old Men's Home without a pension and obtains a pension afterwards, the State is paid nothing. In the case of a man who has a pension when he enters the home, the department gets 14s. Of the inmates, 11½ are non-pensioners.



Hon. C. G. Latham: A number of the inmates are not entitled to pensions, not having been here long enough.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Of the 114 non-pensioners, 64 are Asiatics. The member for Nedlands also made statements about the food. Whether he intended to do so I am not prepared to say, but he did convey that the food was supplied irrespective of any disabilities the inmates might be suffering from unless they were in hospital. The same food, the hon. member said, was put down for all outside the hospital, and a great deal of the food was wasted. There may be some argument that the food might be more varied or that the cooking might be better. I am not going to argue those aspects at present. The inference I drew from the hon. member's remarks was that the food was all of one kind and was put before men irrespective of their likes or dislikes and irrespective of whether they were able to eat it. Those statements are incorrect. There are special diets for diabetics and so forth. There are medical diets for the sick. Such inmates get whatever the medical officer orders. Mince and soft food are supplied for some patients. Special diets consist of mince, sago, rice, eggs, rabbits, bread and milk. Of the 535 inmates who were in the home when the hon. member spoke, 350 were on full diet, 102 on mince meat, 39 on sago, four on arrowroot, and six on eggs. Again, 247 were receiving milk morning and night; and 35 were on bread and milk, mainly because they did not like oatmeal. The 62 on rice were probably Asiatics. These figures show that all the inmates are not on the same diet.

Whilst I agree that probably some alterations can be made—they will be made if possible—yet generally speaking the inmates are a great deal more satisfied than one is led to believe. The hon. member asked why a committee could not be formed. I interjected that I had no objection to a committee. The leader of the movement came in the other day and produced the names of five members who were elected to the committee. In general, everything possible is being done for the health of the inmates. I omitted to add that a new unit hospital is being erected at King Edward Memorial. This we hope to have open by Easter next at latest. When it is opened, there will be another unit that Western Australia can be proud of, one

which will represent a considerable improvement on the unit or hospital there now.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 10.51 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Wednesday, 9th November, 1938.*

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

## BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE.

*Third Reading.*

**THE HONORARY MINISTER** (Hon. E. H. Gray—West) [4.37]: 1 move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

**HON. J. J. HOLMES** (North) [4.38]: When the Bill was under discussion at the second reading, several members indicated the opinion that the measure should be held until such time as we would have seen what was done in connection with the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill, as the one dovetails into the other to such an extent that they must be brought into line.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I thought the Minister was going to hold this Bill over until the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill had been dealt with.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Minister has never said so. The question now before the House is that the State Government Insur-